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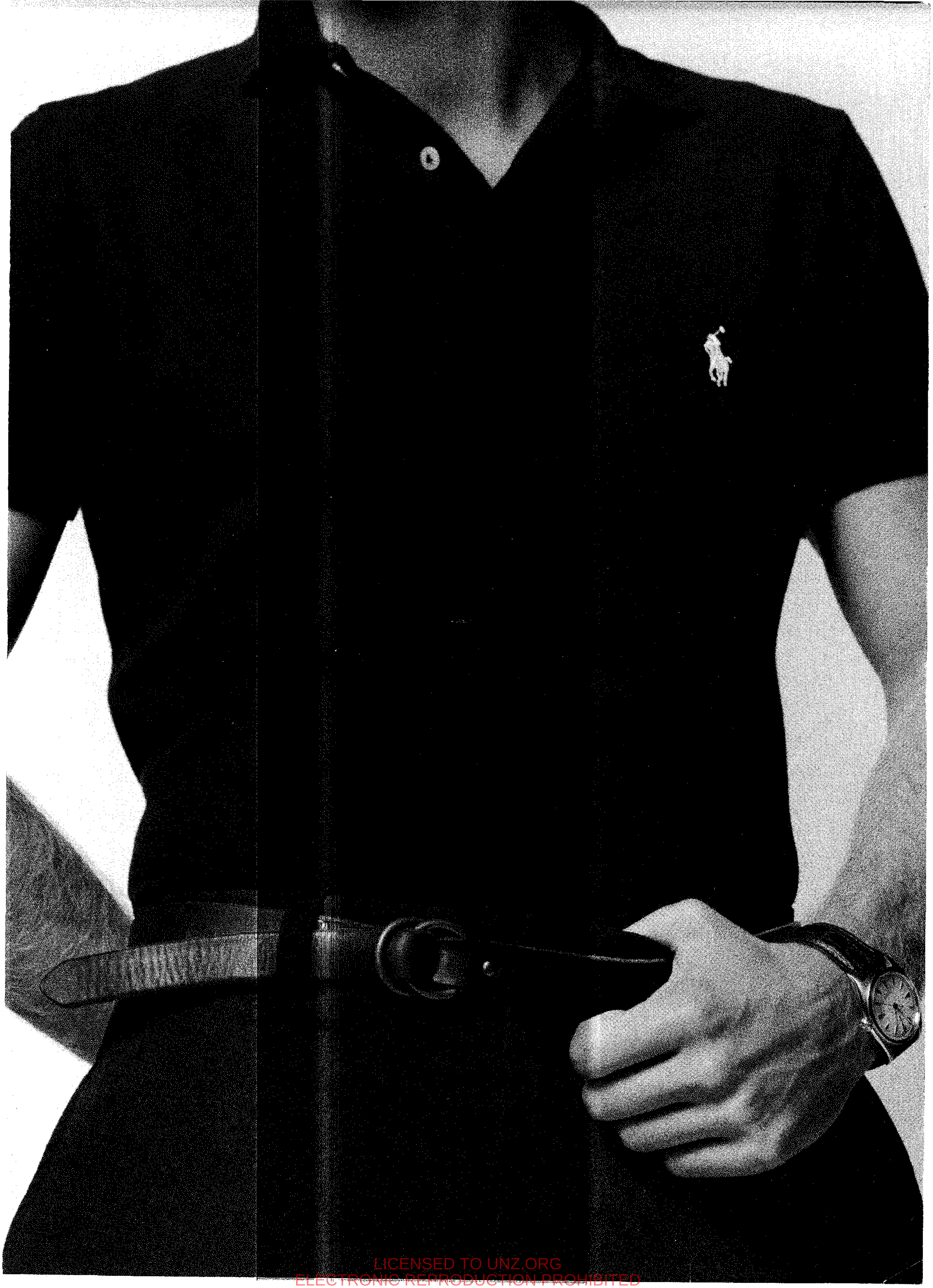

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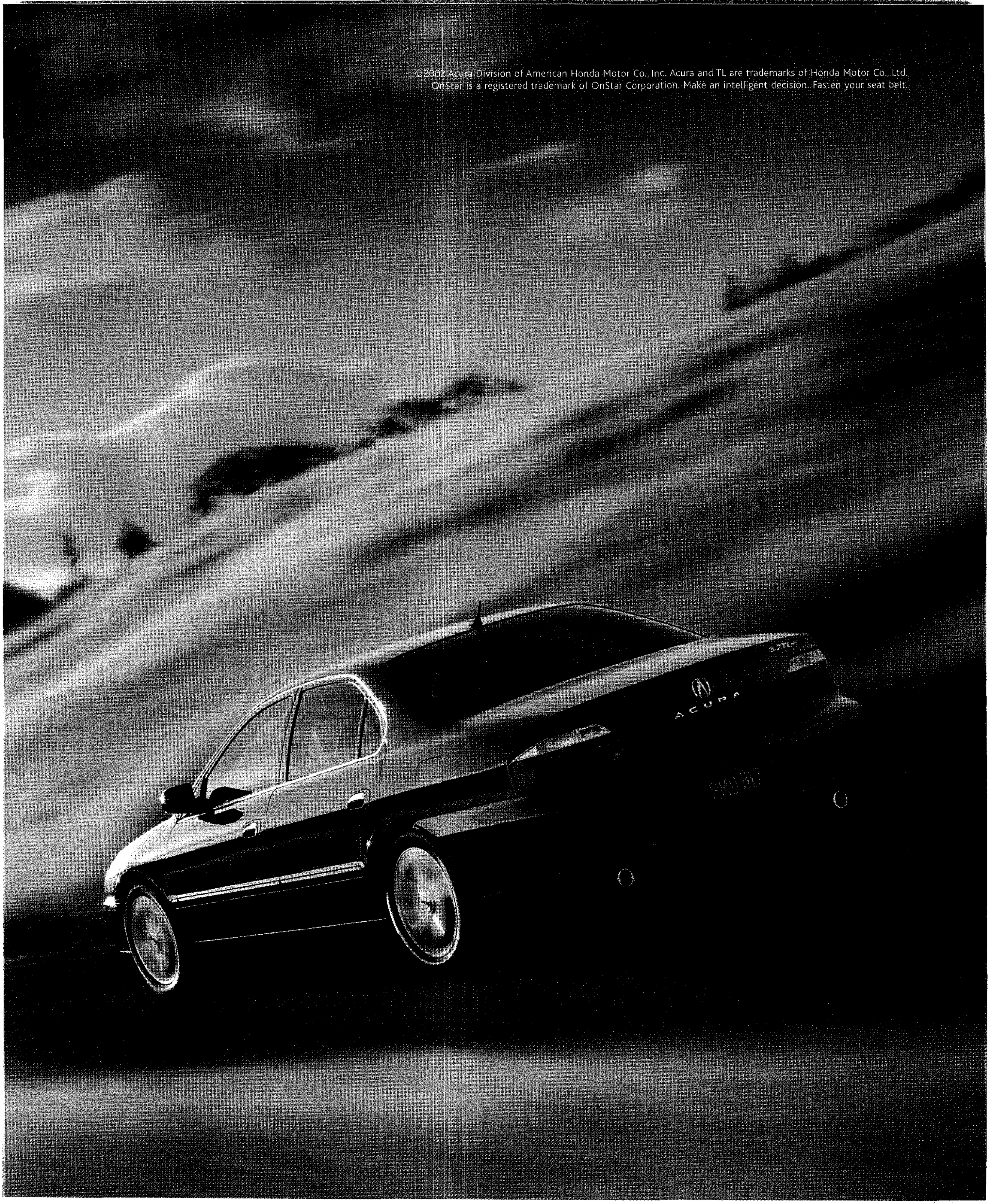

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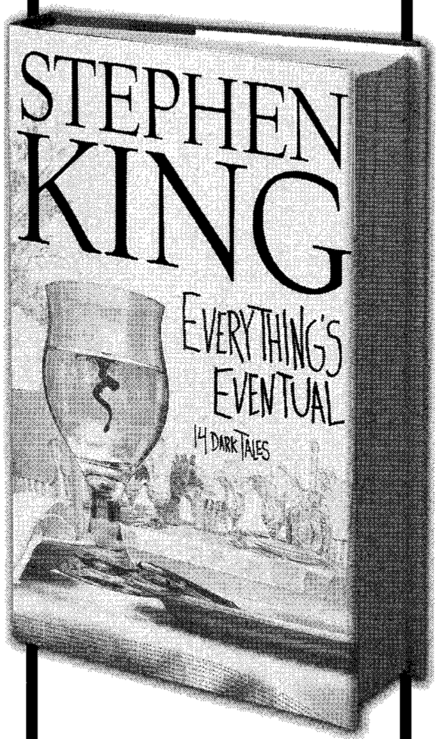

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CONTRIBUTORS

Nicholas Lemann ("The Newcomer," p. 58) is the magazine's Washington correspondent.

Anthony Walton (Poem, p. 108) is the co-editor, with Michael Harper, of "The Vintage Book of African American Poetry."

Andrea Lee (Fiction, p. 120) is the author of "Russian Journal," "Sarah Phillips," and, most recently, "Interesting Women," a collection of short stories.

Gilles Peress (Photographs, pp. 92, 94, 98, 99, 100) is a photojournalist who has worked in many parts of the world. His books include "Farewell to Bosnia" and "The Graves: Srebrenica and Vukovar."

Elizabeth Kolbert ("Fellowship of the Ring," p. 86) is a staff writer who covers New York politics for the magazine.

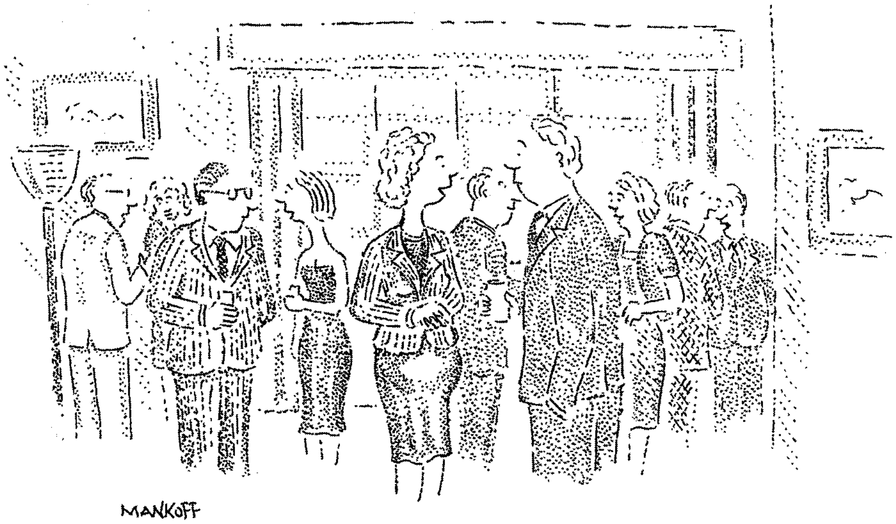
Jane Kramer ("The Patriot," p. 104) writes the Letter from Europe. Her new book, "Lone Patriot," will be published in June.

Steve Martin (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 84) recently adapted Carl Sternheim's 1911 play, "The Underpants." He is the author of "Pure Drivel," a book of humorous essays, and "Shopgirl," a novella.

Mimi Swartz (The Talk of the Town, p. 50) is working on a book about Enron.

Judith Thurman (Books, p. 128) is a staff writer. Her books include "Isak Dinesen: The Life of a Storyteller" and "Secrets of the Flesh: A Life of Colette."

John Lahr (The Theatre, p. 136) is the magazine's senior drama critic and the co-creator, with Elaine Stritch, of "Elaine Stritch at Liberty." ♦



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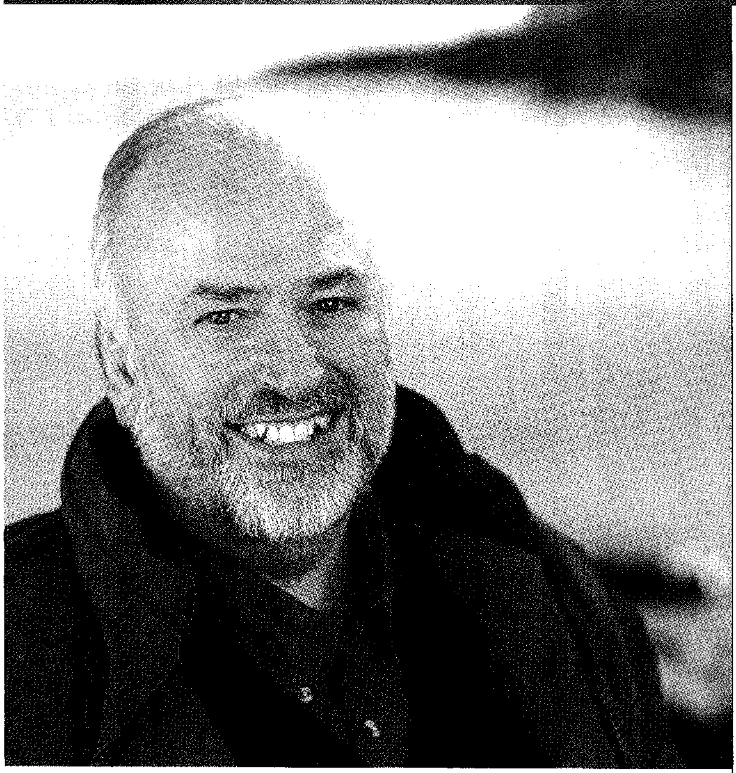

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Sometimes there are remarkable results in cancer. While it's never certain how patients will respond to therapy, there is good reason for hope. When Ken entered the clinic in July 2000, his cancer had grown to the point where doctors could actually detect it without the use of x-rays. However, these tests confirmed how devastating the tumor growth actually was. Ken knew it was a fight he couldn't win, and he dreaded telling his family the bad news. Today, thanks to a treatment from Novartis, Ken's picture is decidedly different. His cancer is inactive, and he's back – full of life for those he loves. Novartis is proud to be the innovative force that's bringing new optimism and hope to patients and their families. No one can promise what the future holds for cancer patients, but today Ken is winning the fight against his particular form of cancer, enjoying life and realizing his dreams.

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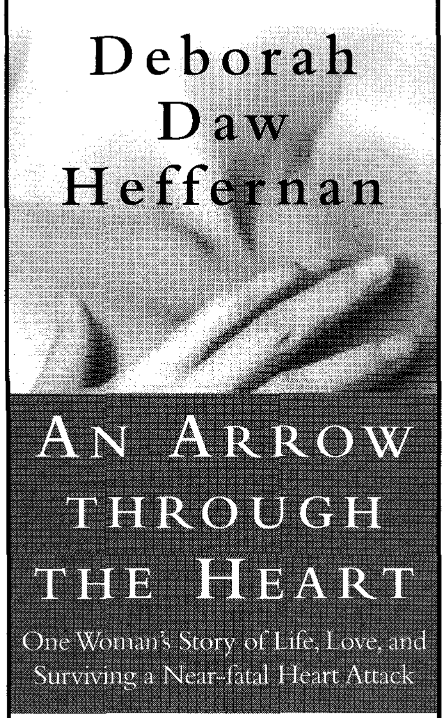
Deborah
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CELIBACY AND THE CHURCH

Hendrik Hertzberg writes that every Roman Catholic priest, upon being ordained, "takes vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience" (The Talk of the Town, April 1st). In fact, the three vows, solemn promises to God, are made only by men and women entering religious orders, such as Jesuits and Franciscans. Diocesan priests, in contrast, who generally run the parishes under the jurisdiction of bishops, don't take the three vows. They accept a Church law that prohibits marriage, but they may inherit money; buy stocks, cars, and homes; and pursue an ambition to power as a bishop, cardinal, or Pope. Of course, the vows do not guarantee holiness—as the great Jesuit theologian John Courtney Murray wrote, they can, misapplied, deprive men of those basic encounters which make them emotionally and spiritually mature. When, however, the three vows support one another, and the priest's prayer life focusses on the self-emptying love of Christ, they can work. Like Hertzberg, I look forward to a priesthood of men and women, married and celibate. But today's crisis is due as much to the corruption of power as to failures of celibate life.

Raymond A. Schroth, S.J.
Jesuit Community Professor of Humanities
St. Peter's College
Jersey City, N.J.

There is no better proof of how the Catholic Church's view of sexuality is distorted than the fact that it has never canonized a married man. (St. Joseph is the exception that proves the rule, since the Church teaches that he never had sexual relations with Mary.) Similarly, there have been very few canonizations of women who were ever married, and almost all of those were widows at the time of their death. The Church, by this omission, is either saying (absurdly) that there have been no saintly husbands or wives in two thousand years, or saying that any sexual activity, even in the context of marriage, somehow lowers one's spiritual standing. With such a narrow approach, it is difficult to see the Church adopting the exquisitely civilized concept of the priesthood that Hertzberg articulated—one in which "ascetic celibacy and human intimacy are parallel spiritual paths."

Thomas A. DiMaggio
York, Pa.

As Hertzberg notes, priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church is a matter of ecclesiastical law and not religious dogma. It has, in fact, always been about Church politics and economics.The idea first arose in 306 A.D. but was not institutionalized until the eleventh century. At the time, it was a means of enjoining local priests from the growing practice of passing on their priesthood (and possession of Church lands and treasure) to their sons. Today, the salient feature of celibacy for the Church is that it obviates the need to pay the clergy a living wage. The question is whether the Church's current shortage of potential priests contributed to its failure to adequately screen its candidates, vigorously police its clergy, and expose and help prosecute its wrongdoers. If so, the Church has become a co-conspirator. But the crisis is an institutional and a bureaucratic one—and not one of faith.

Arthur R. Williams
Tampa, Fla.

It goes without saying that crimes against children are inexcusable, and that any Church coverup is indefensible. It is also unacceptable, however, for Catholic liberalizers to use such tragedies as an excuse to promote their own agenda regarding clerical celibacy and the ordination of women. Many Catholics strongly support the Church's teaching. These questions should be debated on their own merits, not tacked on as riders to a serious moral issue facing the Church.

Darren Raymond
San Diego, Calif.

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Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. They can also be faxed to 212-286-5047. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

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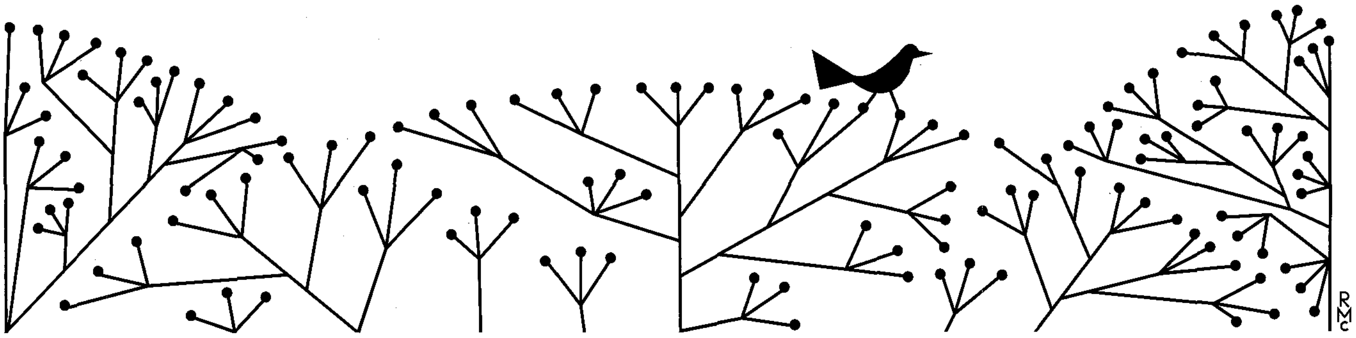

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

A FEW STOUT INDIVIDUALS
A new comedy by John Guare, directed by Michael Grief. In previews. (Signature, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

A GRAND NIGHT FOR SINGING
A revue of the songs of Richard Rodgers, in a staging by the American Musical Theatre Ensemble. Four performances only: May 3 at 8, May 4 at 2 and 8, and May 5 at 3. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. 749-2802, ext. 4428.)

HOUSE AND GARDEN
A pair of conjoined plays, performed simultaneously on two stages, by Alan Ayckbourn. John Tillinger is the director. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

THE ODYSSEY
Derek Walcott's adaptation of Homer's epic poem, in a Willow Cabin Theatre Company production. Edward Berkeley is the director. In previews through May 4. Opens May 5 at 5:30. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

THE PAJAMA GAME
City Center's Encores! series wraps up the season with the 1954 musical written by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross (music and lyrics) and George Abbott and Richard Bissell (book). John Rando is the director. Five performances only: May 2-3 at 8, May 4 at 2 and 8, and May 5 at 6:30. (131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

READING HEBRON
A Canadian Jew tries to make sense of the Hebron Massacre, in a play by Jason Sherman. Previews begin May 2. (Access Theatre, 380 Broadway, at White St. 206-1515.)

RICKY JAY: ON THE STEM
The sleight-of-hand artist returns to New York with a new show, directed by David Mamet. Two previews on May 1. Opens May 2 at 6:30. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

THE SANDMAN
From the Target Margin Theatre, a new opera based on E. T. A. Hoffman's nineteenth-century story about a young man haunted by a childhood fear. In previews. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. 358-3657.)

21 DOG YEARS: DOING TIME@AMAZON.COM
A solo show by Mike Daisy, in which he exposes life at the online giant during its early years. In previews. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

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VIENNA LUSTHAUS (REVISITED)
The choreographer and director Martha Clarke, the playwright Charles L. Mee, and the composer Richard Peaslee's revised version of their 1986 collaboration, a multimedia exploration of Vienna in the early twentieth century. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

. . . AND THEN YOU GO ON: AN ANTHOLOGY OF THE WORKS OF SAMUEL BECKETT
This one-man show, written and performed by Bob Jaffe, incorporates passages from thirteen Beckett works. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes May 19.)

BLUE SURGE
A drama by Rebecca Gilman ("Spinning Into Butter"), which revolves around the police interrogation of two prostitutes after a massage-parlor sting. Robert Falls is the director. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

THE CARPETBAGGER'S CHILDREN
Jean Stapleton, Hallie Foote, and Roberta Maxwell portray three daughters of a Union soldier, in a new play by Horton Foote. Michael Wilson is the director. (Reviewed in our issue of 9/10/01.) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

THE CRUCIBLE
A masterly revival by Richard Eyre of Arthur Miller's drama about the Salem witch-hunt of 1692, an allegory for the blacklisting delirium of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Abigail Williams (the edgy, excellent Angela Bettis), an orphaned seventeen-year-old Puritan, has been seen dancing in the woods trying to cast a spell over the wife (the expert Laura Linney) of her thirty-five-year-old lover and former employer, John Proctor (Liam Neeson, who is a force of nature). Miller demonstrates the hysteric turning herself into an event in order to preserve a sense of goodness and to project her dark, violent, repressed feelings onto others. (3/18/02) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

THE DAZZLE
It's probably perfectly natural to worry that the sum of one's existence will end up being nothing more than an awful mess. In the true case of the infamous Collyer brothers, whose decaying bodies were discovered in 1947 buried beneath a lifetime collection of junk, that fear became a reality of phenomenal proportions. The terrific playwright Richard Greenberg has reimagined the brothers' fatal flaws with mixed results. His play is extremely long on longueurs (in the end, neurotics are actually pretty boring), but thanks to fine performances by the heretofore underrated Reg Rogers, as a concert pianist, and Peter Frechette, as his protective lawyer brother, it has numerous moments of funny-sad clarity. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100. Closes May 12.)

ELAINE STRITCH AT LIBERTY
In her extraordinary one-woman show (co-created with *The New Yorker's* theatre critic John Lahr), Stritchie, as Noël Coward called her, once and for all confirms her status as a living legend. As she sings songs and tells tales about the ups and downs of her long life in the theatre, she ends up capturing more than a single lifetime; her show is the synthesis of so much that is rich and rewarding and heartbreaking about life on the stage. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

THE ELEPHANT MAN
Thanks to the 1980 David Lynch movie, just about everyone is familiar with the story of Victorian London's John Merrick, the Elephant Man, whose grotesque deformity took him from a cruel life in freak shows to a less cruel life among the medical community and the curious upper crust. Bernard Pomerance's 1979 play came first; today it seems a bit didactic, but it is still very moving, and the issues that it raises—about faith, colonialism, charity, sexuality—are just as thought provoking. Billy Crudup does a wonderful job as Merrick, a role played without the aid of theatrical prosthetics, and so does Rupert Graves as Frederick Treves, the surgeon who takes him in. Sean Mathias is the director. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

FORTUNE'S FOOL
Turgenev's little-known 1848 play, set at a Russian country estate, has to do with the way that both meanings of the word "fortune"—fate and finances—hinge and impinge on each other. Alan Bates is a down-on-his-luck gentleman living on the estate, and Frank Langella is his wealthy, arrogant neighbor, accurately characterized as an "infamous, fatuous fop." (He could be the love child of Gore Vidal and Dame Edna.) Just as their characters represent the gamut of the negative qualities of the ruling class, Langella and Bates seem to use up all the acting possibilities in the play as they goad and react to each other; from the moment they first appear on the stage together, it becomes almost unnecessary for anyone else to be present, so completely do they dominate the evening. Directed by Arthur Penn, making his first Broadway foray in twenty years. (4/15/02) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

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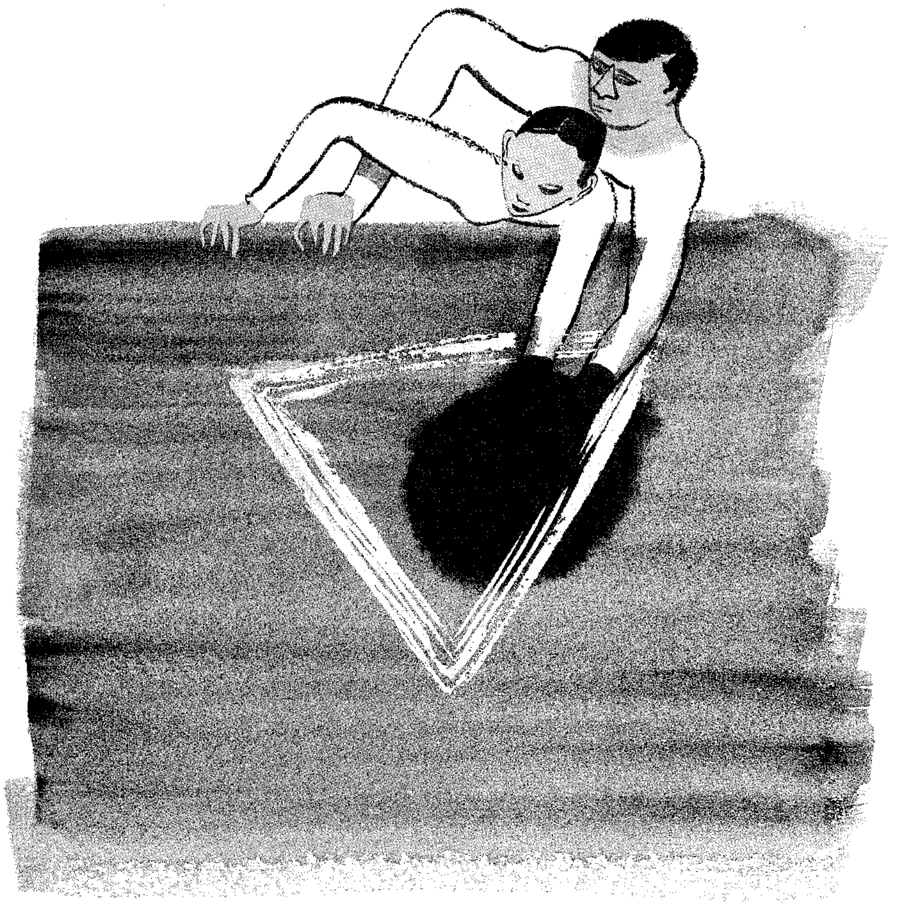


The Tel Aviv-based Batsheva Dance Company, in "Naharin's Virus," at BAM.

RUBEN TOLEDO

THE GOAT; OR, WHO IS SYLVIA?
Left to his own devices, without society's rules or the superego's tyrannical eye, homo sapiens would shtup mud. Or so Edward Albee contends in his ninety-minute anecdote about a happily married, successful architect who falls in love with a goat called Sylvia. It takes all of Albee's expertise to tease this joke into an evening; but it allows Mercedes Ruehl some hilarious moments of high dudgeon as she trashes the house and her husband for "cruising livestock." The sex happens offstage, alas; if Mr. Albee had put his special pleading for bestiality in front of the paying customers, they'd be getting something for their top dollar. David Esbjornson is the director. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GODFADDA WORKOUT
A one-man show written and performed by Seth Isler. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

THE GOLEM
Robert Prosky stars in H. Leivick's 1921 version of the legend of the Golem of Prague, in which a sixteenth-century rabbi defies God to protect his people from attack. Lawrence Sacharow is the director. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 239-6200. Closes May 12.)

THE GRADUATE
This pointless production, starring Kathleen Turner as Mrs. Robinson, was a hit in London, but the flap must have gone out of its wings during the transatlantic journey. Turner's first scene with the young Benjamin Braddock (Jason Biggs, of "American Pie" fame), intended to pave the way for seduction, is endless and full of dead air, and it turns out to be an accurate indicator of things to come. There are exactly two pleasures here: Victor Slezak, as Mr. Robinson, and Murphy Guyer, as Benjamin's father; they depict beautifully the anger and anxiety that underlie their postwar poolside bonhomie. Terry Johnson, who directed, adapted the novel and the screenplay, and we'll never understand why. (4/15/02) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

INTO THE WOODS
Stephen Sondheim's 1987 musical examination of fairy-tale archetypes stars Vanessa Williams and John McMartin. James Lapine, who wrote the book, is the director. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

KILT
A young man travels to Scotland for his grandfather's funeral and secrets are revealed, in a play written by Jonathan Wilson and directed by Jack Hofsiss. (The Directors Company, 311 W. 43rd St. 206-1515. Closes May 4.)

THE LAST FIVE YEARS
This new work by the composer Jason Robert Brown ("Parade") is not really a musical per se (it has no book to speak of); it's a song cycle of charming, often funny, but not terribly memorable tunes that trace the five-year relationship of a young New York City couple. The super-talented Norbert Leo Butz and Sherie René Scott do everything in their admirable power to bring their less-than-three-dimensional characters into sharp focus. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

THE MAN WHO HAD ALL THE LUCK
Chris O'Donnell has the title role in a revival of Arthur Miller's 1940 drama, co-starring with Samantha Mathis. Scott Ellis is the director. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

METAMORPHOSES
In Ovid's tales, loosely adapted and directed by Mary Zimmerman, who has had the ingenious idea of staging the caprice of the gods in a swimming pool, water is life; it calls up associations with the unconscious, the primordial ooze, birth, and sex. The elegant, surreal playfulness of the stage picture broadcasts the tone of Zimmerman's deft direction and her vernacular reinventions. The show is fun and full of wonder, but it illustrates rather than dramatizes psychic struggle. The show's gimmick, the pool, turns out to be its metaphor—refreshing and shallow. (3/18/02) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

MR. GOLDWYN
As an exercise in hagiography, this play about the Hollywood mogul and legendary maestro of the malaprop, written by Marsha Lebby and John Lollos, makes A&E's "Biography" look edgy. The show has no dramatic trajectory, no psychological insight, and no second act. (3/25/02) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

MORNING'S AT SEVEN
A Lincoln Center revival of Paul Osborn's 1939 back-yard drama. Daniel Sullivan is the director. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE MURALS OF ROCKEFELLER CENTER
The painter Diego Rivera, John D. Rockefeller, and a controversial portrait of Lenin are at the center of this Irondale Ensemble Project drama. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 718-488-9233. Closes May 18.)

THE MYSTERY OF CHARLES DICKENS
Simon Callow portrays the author and forty-nine of his characters, in a one-man show written by Peter Ackroyd. (Belasco Theatre, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

OKLAHOMA!
There are stupendous pleasures in the Royal National Theatre's award-winning version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1943 American classic. Many of them are due to the high-spirited, humorous choreography of Susan Stroman, and to Anthony Ward's picturesque set, which immediately submerges us in a gorgeous world of folk innocence. But in the show's retranslation to its natural Broadway habitat, technique, which can make the show work, is not enough to make it wonderful. The issue of cultural chemistry comes into play: an emotional lopsidedness has become evident, particularly in the casting. Americans are a sort of mutant breed, whose optimism is a sure sign of emotional aberration. The English are constitutionally unable to fathom it. (4/1/02) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

PEARL THEATRE COMPANY
Presenting "Romeo and Juliet" and "Much Ado About Nothing" in repertory. (80 St. Mark's Pl. 598-9802.)

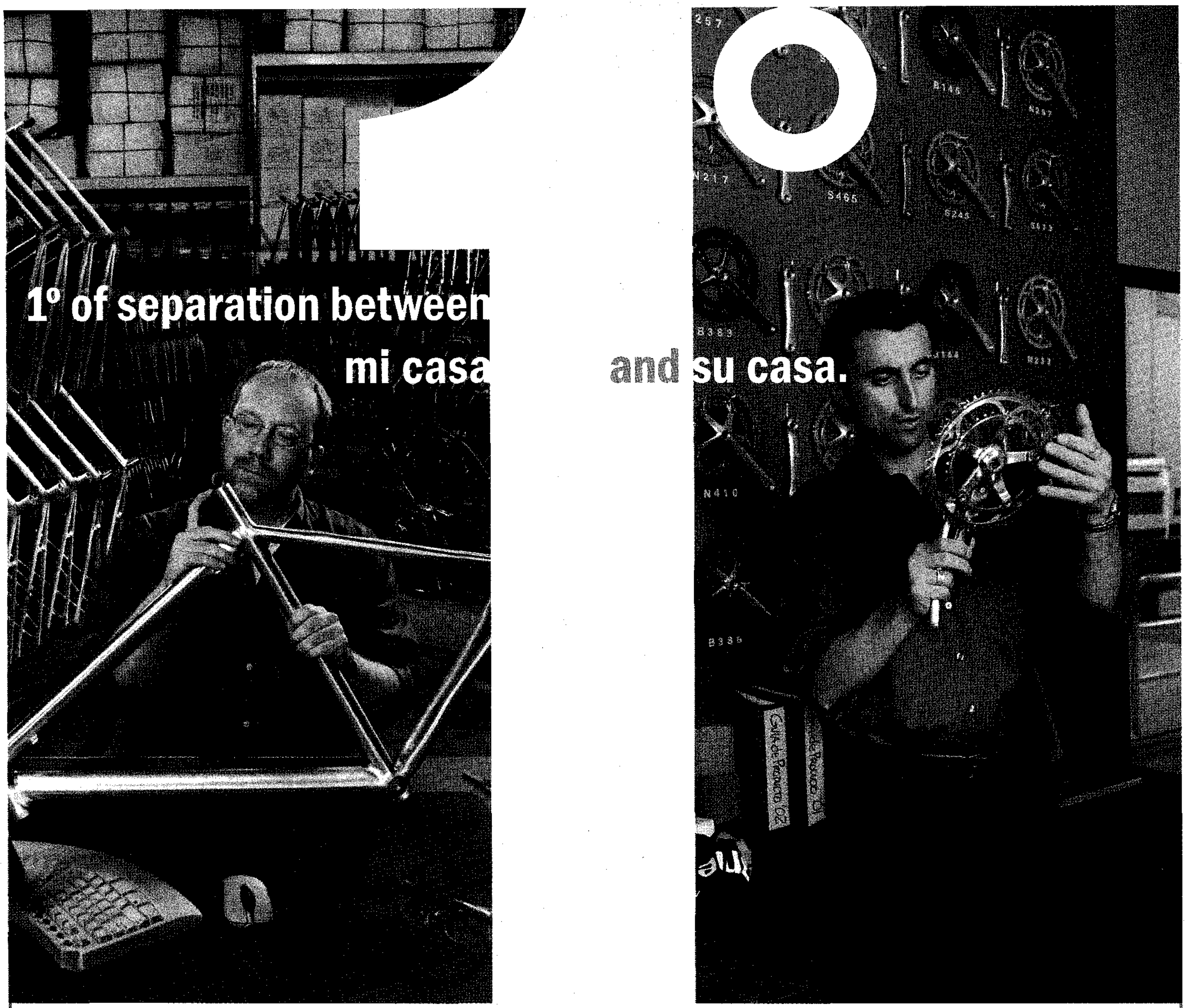
PIGTOWN
A Limerick pork butcher recalls life in twentieth-century Ireland, in a play by Mike Finn. Charlotte Moore is the director. (Irish Rep, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

PRIVATE LIVES
The West End staging of Noël Coward's play, starring Alan Rickman and Lindsay Duncan, comes to Broadway. Howard Davies is the director. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

QED
Peter Parnell's play, starring Alan Alda as the physicist Richard Feynman, buzzes with life. Set in 1986—the year of the Challenger explosion, whose causes Feynman helped to investigate—"QED" takes us through an afternoon and evening in Feynman's office at Caltech, where he talks about such subjects as photons, drumming, the Manhattan Project, cancer, and "South Pacific." Alda's performance, which makes much use of that scrunchy-eyed smile of his, is one of utter charm. Sundays and Mondays only. (11/26/01) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

SURVIVING GRACE
A play by Trish Vradenburg, about a fraught mother-and-daughter relationship. Illeana Douglas and Doris Belack star. Jack Hofsiss directs. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-7171.)

SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS
This new musical, adapted from the excellent Clifford Odets–Ernest Lehman movie (1957) by a high-powered artistic team headed by the director Nicholas Hytner, is pitched at a level of ambition comparable to its subject's. The notion of New York as a playground was propagated by Broadway's gossip columnists, and especially by Walter Winchell, whose insatiable, driven personality makes him perfect material for the Broadway musical and who was the inspiration for the character J. J. Hunsecker (played by the expert John Lithgow). At first glance, "Sweet Smell" seems to have got it right. Bob Crowley's behemoth gray skyscrapers loom over the stage, turning it into a kind of concrete canyon that resounds with the echo of rumor. John Guare, who wrote the book, has a clear bead on the material's potent mixture of comic and craven. Unfortunately, the wit of the book is not sustained in Marvin Hamlisch's soft, undis-



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tinguished score and Craig Carnelia's flat lyrics. (3/25/02) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE

A 1967 Hollywood take on the Roaring Twenties—which starred Julie Andrews as an ingenue-flapper who comes to New York City, finds true love, and helps break up a Chinese-run white-slavery ring—reimagined for the stage in 2002. Just like the movie, it's supposed to be all madcap Jazz Age fizziness, but the harder the cast sings and dances, the flatter the enterprise falls. The colors seem garish rather than gay, the manic energy feels forced at gunpoint, and the only thing you recall about Sutton Foster's Millie after you leave the theatre is her huge white teeth and bouncy black bob. Call it thoroughly boring, shrilly. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

TOPDOG/UNDERDOG

The Public Theatre's production of Suzan-Lori Parks's play has moved to Broadway, starring Jeffrey Wright and Mos Def. George C. Wolfe is the director. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

THE UNDERPANTS

Has there ever been a more promising title for a play? After all, no other garment is so close to the facts and the concomitant follies of life. Steve Martin has adapted Carl Sternheim's satirical 1911 play, which deals with the consequences of an embarrassing event: a woman's underpants fall down in public, while she is watching a royal parade. The woman's husband (Byron Jennings), a respectable government clerk, is mortified, but the mishap has, if anything, newly awakened his wife (Cheryl Lynn Bowers) to life's possibilities, which include the several men who show up wanting to rent a room from them. The production suffers somewhat from Barry Edelstein's oppressively noisy direction, but Martin's work is inspired; he brings out the play's middle-class absurdities and adds some wise nonsense of his own. (4/15/02) (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes May 12.)

XTRAVAGANZA

A fun, fascinating, and heartfelt tribute to the pioneers of over-the-top performance spectacle, from the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show to Busby Berkeley. The show focusses on technical innovations, so, unlike most multimedia productions, this one manages to make the technology feel integral, by drawing a clear parallel between the innovations it's presenting—like electricity—and those it's using to do so, like real-time filming onstage. The gifted cast of six is equally adept at conveying the thrill of creation and the toll that it takes over time, as well as singing and dancing. Directed by Marianne Weems. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET

"Serenade," the dance critic Doris Hering once pointed out, "is Balanchine's votive offering to the art." It is for the dancers, too—even now, decades after its making. Whether they are rushing in gorgeous waves of movement or waiting, quiet and alert, one feels, in the way they throw themselves into the dance, the dream of dance that got them started. "Serenade" opens the season, April 30 at 7:30, on a program with "Stravinsky Violin Concerto" and "Symphony in C." It will be performed twice more this season. ♦ May 1 at 8: "Raymonda Variations," "Morgen," and "In G Major." ♦ May 2 at 8: "In G Major," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "Fancy Free." ♦ May 3 at 8: "Raymonda Variations," "Reunions," and "Symphony in C." ♦ May 4 at 2: "Serenade," "Reunions," and "Fancy Free." ♦ May 4 at 8: "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," "Correlazione," and "Symphony in C." ♦ May 5 at 3: "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," "Morgen," and "In G Major." ♦ May 7 at 7:30: "Raymonda Variations," "Correlazione," and "Fancy Free." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through June 30.)

BATSHEVA DANCE COMPANY

Ohad Naharin, the artistic director of the Tel Aviv-based Batsheva Dance Company, likes to play clannish group cohesion off against anarchic individualism. In his latest work, "Naharin's Virus," there's no getting around the political freight of these polarities: the current crisis in Israel shadows the sixteen dancers' every move. The set consists of a pitch-black, eight-foot-high blackboard-wall that runs the length of the stage. The dancers slam against it; mark it up, graffiti-style; line up, as if against a firing wall; and, in the case of one dancer, balance on top of it as if to offer, in monotone, reasons for hope or despair—it's not at all clear which. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. April 30 and May 2-4 at 7:30.)

ELIOT FELD'S BALLET TECH

May 1 at 8 and May 5 at 2: "Theatre," "Pacific Dances," and "Juke Box." ♦ May 2 and May 4 at 8: "Clave," "Pianola," "At Midnight," and "Paper Tiger." ♦ May 3 at 8: "Contra Pose," "Yo Johann," "Lincoln Portrait," and "Pacific Dances." ♦ May 4 at 2, a family matinée: "Meshugana Dances," "Sleep Study," "3 Commedia Dances," and "Apple Pie." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

"TOO BEAUTIFUL A DAY"

Last year, the self-described "idea gal" Ann Carlson planned to revisit "Flag," the tribal and sometimes frenzied group piece she created in the wake of the Gulf War. It was called "Flag" because the first time out it took place on an enormous American flag. Carlson says, "I thought, the second Bush is in office, so maybe the ideas will resonate again." But after September 11th dancing on the flag felt impossible. "And looking up at the flag—the flag, the flag, the flag, over and over—I noticed the negative space around it." So she replaced the flag with a blue carpet: "the sky fallen to the ground." Also reworked for the program is Carlson's 1990 solo, "Blanket," in which an eighty-six-year-old woman is overtaken by her past while carrying flowers to her own grave. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. May 1-2 and May 8 at 9.)

HOPE CLARK AND TAI DANG

The choreographer and former Elizabeth Streb dancer Hope Clark offers three works, including "Tempering," for seven children who have studied at Clark's "Kid Action" program. Tai Dang presents "Now and Then, You Put Your Hand Over," set to traditional Vietnamese string music as well as an original composition by Ngu Yen. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. May 3-5 at 8:30.)

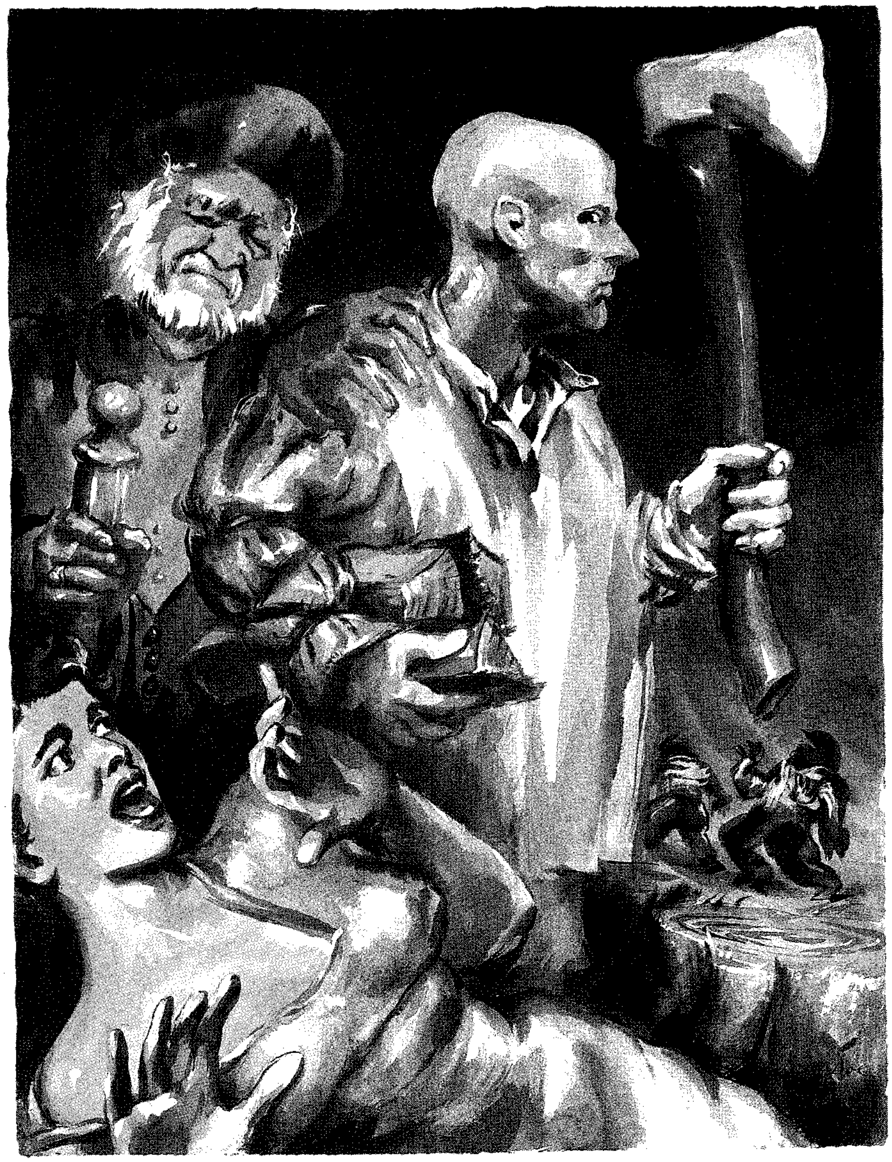
NIGHT LIFE CONCERTS

JOHNNIE JOHNSON

A living piece of rock-and-roll history, Johnnie Johnson played piano in Chuck Berry's band for nearly thirty years, and along the way inspired Berry to write "Johnnie B. Goode." (The Zipper Theatre, 336 W. 37th St. 563-0480. May 1 at 9.)

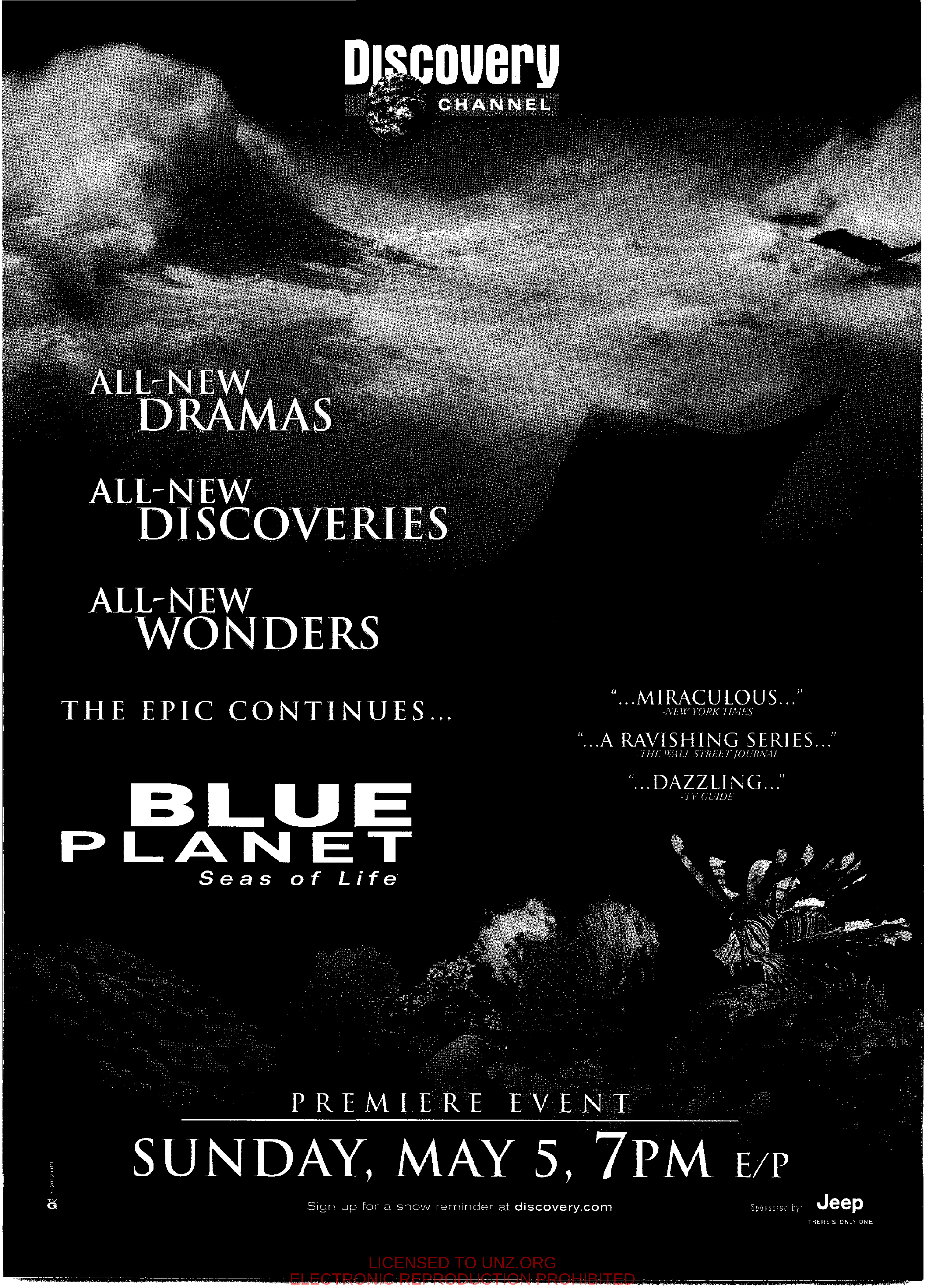
HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ

Family ties rule as the **Heath Brothers** share an evening with the husband-and-wife vocal team of



"The Golem," by H. Leivick, at Manhattan Ensemble Theatre.

DON DOE



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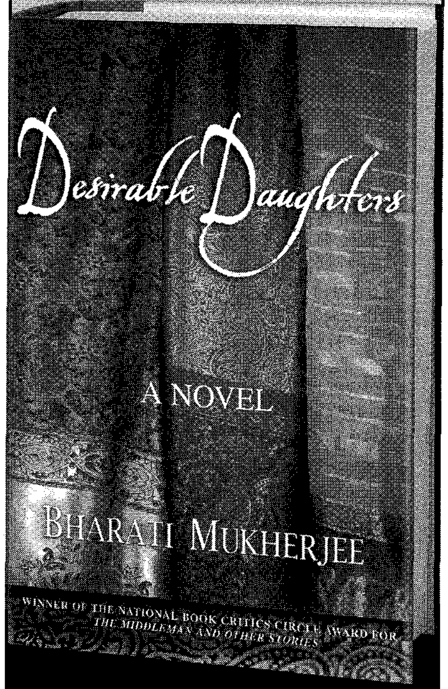

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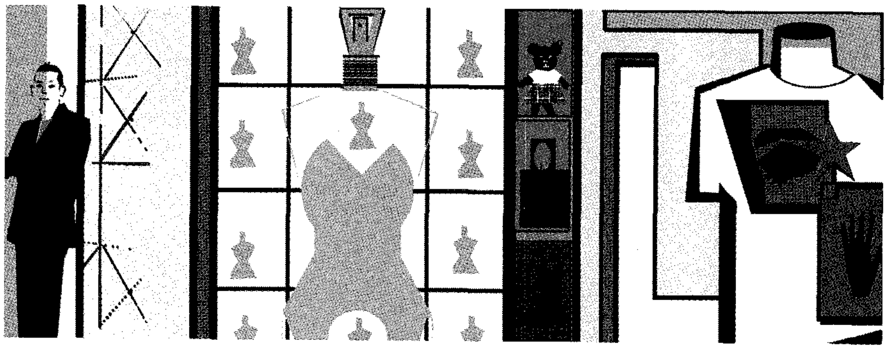


"It's sort of very Westernized, but, like, really Eastern, too!" says the spiky-haired salesman at the new **JEAN PAUL GAULTIER** shop (759 Madison Ave.; 249-0235), describing the store's ambitious interior. The place does, in fact, look like the boudoir of a successful courtesan in nineteen-thirties Marrakech: it has padded pale-pink taffeta walls, bevelled-mirror columns, arched cabinets, and a huge screen made of orange and olive cut-glass panels. Philippe Starck designed everything down to the last crystal vitrine knob, and the result makes a perfect foil for the merchandise, a collection of items that only Gaultier, a sort of Gallic Peck's bad boy, could get away with. A leather clutch bag seems, at first, suitable for an evening at the Met, but closer inspection reveals that the handle is made from brass knuckles ($1,200). A sheer, clinging tattoo-print shirt is decorated with a fat heart, a serpent, and a twisted ribbon that says "Safe Sex Forever." There's even a Teddy bear that, with its blue eyes, plaid kilt, striped matelot shirt, and pierced nose and ear, looks more than a little like the designer himself.

The clothes at **MARNI** (161 Mercer St.; 343-3912) are up to the curious task of outfitting a well-heeled Cinderella for both scrubbing and dancing. A deliberately wrinkled tulip-print dress has a homely air, though at $620 it's clearly not meant to be confined to the scullery; a $1,190 coat with roughly sewn flowers and a hem made of striped fabric offers a similar sartorial mixed metaphor. Marni's designer, Consuelo Castiglioni, who is based in Milan, may favor gingham, calico, and mattress ticking, but the shop's décor, created by the London firm Future Systems, is anything but cozy. A stainless-steel hanging rail wends along one wall. Across the room an undulating steel counter holds Minnie Mouse pumps and hobo purses. All these high-concept ideas can have a downside: the steel mat at the entrance leads to an unexpected step, obliging the security guard to warn prospective glass-slipper wearers to watch where they're going.

Around the corner from Marni, the new **BARNEYS NEW YORK CO-OP** (116 Wooster St.; 965-9964) has taken up residence in a huge poured-concrete space haunted by retail ghosts: it was for years the New York home of Comme des Garçons and more recently housed Prada's Sport collection. Now Simon Doonan, Barneys' creative director, has attempted to soften the atmosphere with, among other things, spindly papier-mâché mannequins. "I bought them from some guy in 1987 in the East Village," Doonan says of the skeletal figures, who have what seem like branches growing from their heads. "He said they were display props from an old department store in the Midwest. There was a whole collection of them—they were like scary, wicked tree people. God knows how old they are." The tree people are joined by a large sign that is similarly jaunty but creepy: it was made by the artist Malcolm Hill, and it spells out "Co-op" in letters made from mannequins' body parts. The merchandise reflects the rough-hewn sensibility: along with faded denim jackets by Marc Jacobs and belts with buckles sporting junk-drawer jewelry, there are shredded sleeveless T-shirts by mrs ($318) that have tags that read, "Each piece is unique and special. Feel good about it."

—*Lynn Yaeger*

KIM DEMARCO

Jackie & Roy. Blood may account in part for the Heath Brothers' uncommon cohesion as a unit, but the saxophonist Jimmy, the bassist Percy, and the drummer Albert have each made their own marks in jazz history. Jackie Cain and Roy Kral have been harmonizing since the late forties, when they met as sweet young things in Charlie Ventura's bop-made-friendly band. Thankfully, they haven't yet lost their tempered modern-jazz edge. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. May 2 at 8.)

NICK CAVE
Despite his status as the reluctant godfather of the goth movement, the morbid Aussie bard has long since evolved from a black-clad rocker into an accomplished songwriter. With **Neko Case** on May 2. Before her current incarnation as a country singer, Case was a drummer in a pop-punk outfit, and that hard-hitting sensibility jells perfectly with her dark tales. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 307-7171. May 2-3 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
May 3 at 8: Three prodigious, much respected modern saxophonists—**David Liebman, Michael Brecker,** and **Joe Lovano**—return to the source of all post-bop jazz saxophone: John Coltrane, who would have turned seventy-six this year, and who, despite the virtuous players who have followed in his wake, is still sorely missed thirty-five years after his death. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. For more information, call 545-7536.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—May 1: The neo-soul singer **Musiq Soulchild** pays a visit with songs from his forthcoming sophomore release, "Juslisen." May 2: A night of reggae with the **Wailers.** May 3-4: **Dickey Betts,** the former Allman Brothers guitarist and songwriter ("Ramblin' Man" was his), flies the flag of Southern rock.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—May 4: New York's **Firewater** returns to their home town after a barnstorming European tour. Pairing the eclectic arsenal of seasoned beatniks with the noirish swagger of barroom-brawl survivors, the members of Firewater make even such clichéd subjects as hangovers and girl trouble sound exotic and dangerous. With the shimmering rock of the **Walkmen** and **Big Lazy,** the elegantly gritty instrumental trio led by the guitarist Stephen Ulrich. May 5: David Bazan, the sincere man who records under the name of **Pedro the Lion,** favors songs that are restrained meditations on faith (he's a devout Christian) and relationships. Sharing the bill is **Damien Jurado,** whose voice can directly channel the spirit of the "Nebraska"-era Bruce Springsteen. On his latest album, "I Break Chairs," however, Jurado dispenses with the quietly tortured acoustic music that brought him a loyal following as he turns to riotously tortured rock music.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—May 3: The former Bongos front man **Richard Barone.** May 4: Singer-songwriter **Joe Henry,** whose restless spirit has taken him from alt-country to experimental pop, sometimes with sublime results.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—May 3: The **Ladybug Transistor's** co-leader Gary Olson is a Brooklyn native, and he and his bandmates seem to have inherited Walt Whitman's vision of the borough, where, as the poet once wrote, one can wander its "ample hills" and feel "curious abrupt questionings." May 3-4: **Droid** brings its unique fusion of electronic break-beat motifs and jazz improvisation to the intimate Old Office space. Headed by the drummer Amir Ziv, the outfit uses bass, synthesizer, electrified horns, and drums to produce a spacey stutter funk that transcends the narrow confines of its genre, the maniacally urgent dance music known as drum and bass. May 5: **Ken Waldman,** a fiddler and poet from Alaska.

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-653-1703)—May 3: **Neko Case** (see Concerts—Nick Cave). May 4: The **Ladybug Transistor** (see the Knitting Factory).

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Dubbed the Next Big Thing by an infatuated press, the **Yeah Yeah Yeahs** return home from a European tour for a pair of shows on May 1-2. Taking inspiration from eighties-era post-punk and New Wave, the trio follows those certified local stars the Strokes in recalling the days when New York was a hotbed of new music. The extravagant front woman Karen O, who has been known to turn cartwheels and pour beer on herself onstage, channels the badass heart of rock and roll, luring the audience in with a kind of lurid pillow talk. May 7: **Ken Stringfellow** is best known as the founder of the Posies—the Seattle-based pop group that managed to avoid both the influences of grunge and major-label success. His latest release, "Touched," shapes his soft vocals into eleven quirky and appealing songs.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

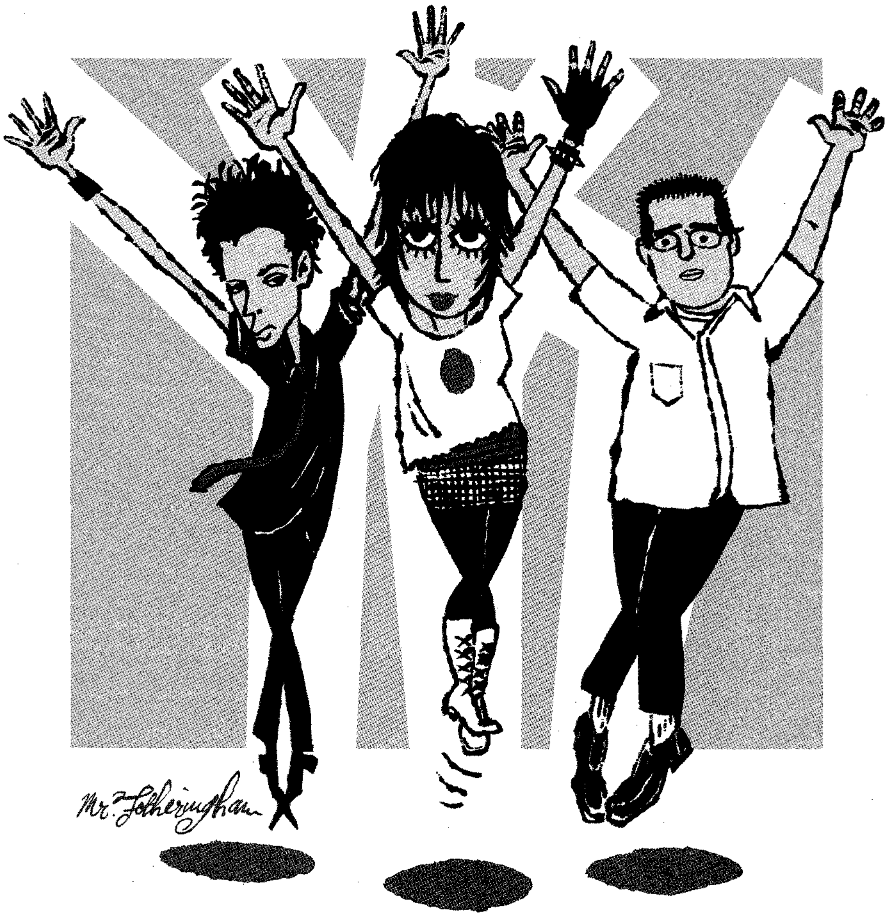
ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through May 25: Too young to be labelled the grande dame of cabaret, but still reigning over her dominion like a benevolent queen, **Karen Akers** brings with her a surfeit of sophistication, verve, and glamour. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through May 5: A week of piano music with the **Michel Camilo** trio and the **Kenny Werner** trio. It doesn't take much to get Camilo to turn on the heat; leading him to a stage will just about do it. The combination of his grandiose technique, modern-jazz sensibilities, and Latin leanings make for a tangy stew. Werner is a more introspective sort, but he, too, warms to a crowd. He may be one of the more gifted sidemen of his generation, as his work with Joe Lovano and Tom Harrell, among many others, has proved, but Werner truly blossoms when leading his own feisty small groups.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—She may have found a secure place in the neo-hipster's pantheon thanks to her role as the straight-faced vocal sidekick to her then-husband Louis Prima during that wild man's fifties heyday, but **Keely Smith** (here May 7-25) can still sing the stuffing out of a straight ballad as well as swing any tune into the stratosphere. She's proof that it's possible to be legendary and underrated at the same time.

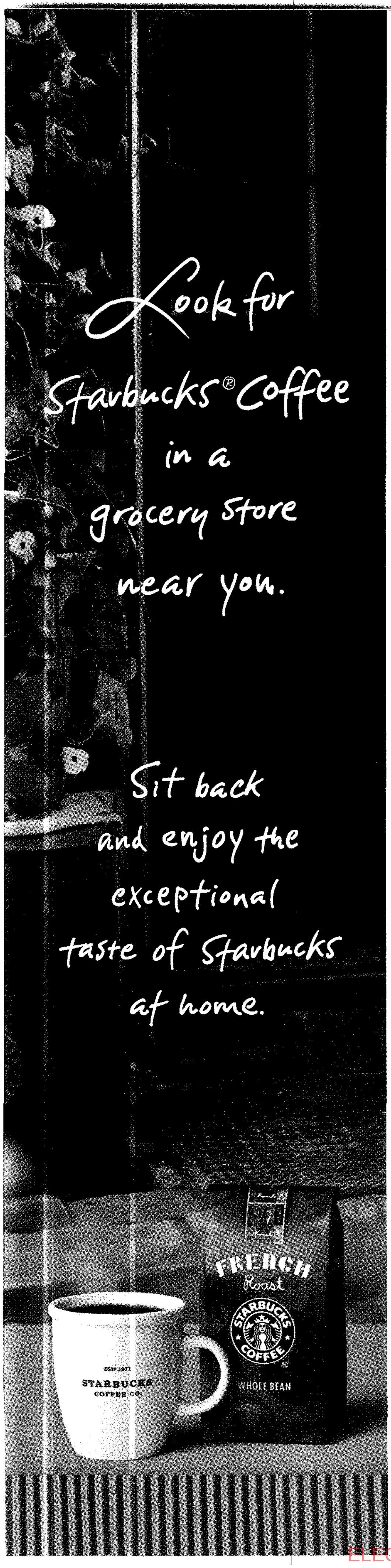
IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through May 5: The **Kenny Garrett** quartet. Much like his former boss Miles Davis did, the saxophonist Garrett has warmed to R. & B. and pop, and his latest release, "Happy People," is no exception. While that doesn't thrill those enchanted by the ripsnorting improviser who shredded the air with tensile post-bop solos on such nineties recordings as "Triology" and "Pursuance," Garrett marches only to his own (funky) drummer. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—If the rhythmically daring pianist **Danilo Perez** (here with his trio through May 5) is sounding that much more incisive these days, it's probably because of the on-the-job training he's gotten in Wayne Shorter's current quartet—on his new release, "Footprints Live!," the master saxophonist and the Panamanian keyboardist tussle brilliantly. With his own trio, Perez flaunts his zesty blend of Latin propulsion and Thelonious Monk-like angularity. Dining.



Karen O and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs play a pair of shows at the Mercury Lounge.

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM



VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through May 5: The **Lou Donaldson** quartet. To be given back-to-back engagements at the Vanguard, the subterranean sanctum of jazz, is an honor afforded to only a chosen few. The inimitable alto saxophonist Donaldson settles in, bringing his high-style blend of authentic bop and good-time R. & B. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Tapestry in the Renaissance: Art and Magnificence."** The aptly titled show features forty-one sumptuous examples of magnificence woven between 1420 and 1560, including "The Unicorn Defends Itself," from the Met's own Cloisters, along with three panels from the ten-part "Acts of the Apostles," designed by Raphael for the Sistine Chapel, and all four sections of the "Alba Passion" cycle, shown together here for the first time since 1877. Through June 19. ♦ **"Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi: Father and Daughter Painters in Baroque Italy."** Through May 12. ♦ **"Surrealism: Desire Unbound."** Through May 5. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—**"Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting."** Gerhard Richter has worked in many styles since 1961, when he escaped from East Germany. Previously seen piecemeal here, his art has struck many as tricky and cold, but it turns out that it aches with emotion. Richter's love of painting, in a tense relationship with his fierce skepticism, generates sustained intellectual drama with regular bonuses of rapture. This show may redraw the map of painting's place in the wider culture. Through May 21. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—After the black walls and visual cacophony of the Brazilian extravaganza that precedes it, Rachel Whiteread's massive sculptural installation fills the museum's top-floor galleries like a silent lament. Whiteread has cast the interior of her London studio and home, a fifties-era building that previously served as a synagogue and a warehouse. Through June 5. ♦ **"Brazil: Body and Soul."** Through May 29. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The 2002 Biennial is a vast, pleasant, rather drab affair, made up of predominantly earnest, unambitious works by a hundred and thirteen artists and collaborative teams on four floors of the museum and in Central Park, where you can find a fifty-foot steel elm tree. The show's New Age-ish curator Lawrence R. Rinder declares that today's young American artists crave "some greater role than mere decoration or ironic critique." His Biennial bunch achieves something decidedly lesser, on the whole, with gimmicky audio and computer works, self-indulgent installations, and a great many unsurprising video projections. ("Vita brevis, video longa," one observer remarked.) Serious painting and sculpture are scarce. Momentary relief arrives in the form of memorable pieces by Vija Celmins, Chan Chao, Stephen Dean, and Lorna Simpson. Through May 26. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

WHITFIELD LOVELL
A sneakily mild-mannered heir to the great installation provocateur Ed Kienholz, Lovell portrays African-Americans of another era: men in bowler hats, women in long Sunday dresses, a G.I. in uniform. Taken from anonymous photographs and drawn on dilapidated wooden planks, the portraits are accompanied by equally battered antiques: clocks, hymnals, a silver tea service, a multivolume set of "Great Epochs in American History." What these share—and distill—is a sober, precarious gentility. Lovell quietly conjures up a struggle for middle-class distinction and respect, for privileges as well as for rights. Mild-manneredness, in a way, is the whole point. Through May 4. (DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111.)

ODD NERDRUM
If you think blondes have more fun, you haven't been to Nerdrum's Norway, a twilit, barren land where amputees and transsexuals do desultory yoga exercises. Once upon a time, Nerdrum's gloomy virtuosity made him seem like Scandinavia's answer to Andrew Wyeth; lately he looks more like the Nordic Frank Frazetta. Through May 11. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545.)

A. R. PENCK
The artist's big, spiky figurative paintings have fallen from favor since riding the neo-expressionist wave of two decades ago. A piquant show of unfamiliar works on paper (mostly gouaches) from the early nineteen-seventies hints at what was missed in the haste to pigeonhole him. In a panoply of styles (perceptual realism, surreal ab-

TABLES FOR TWO

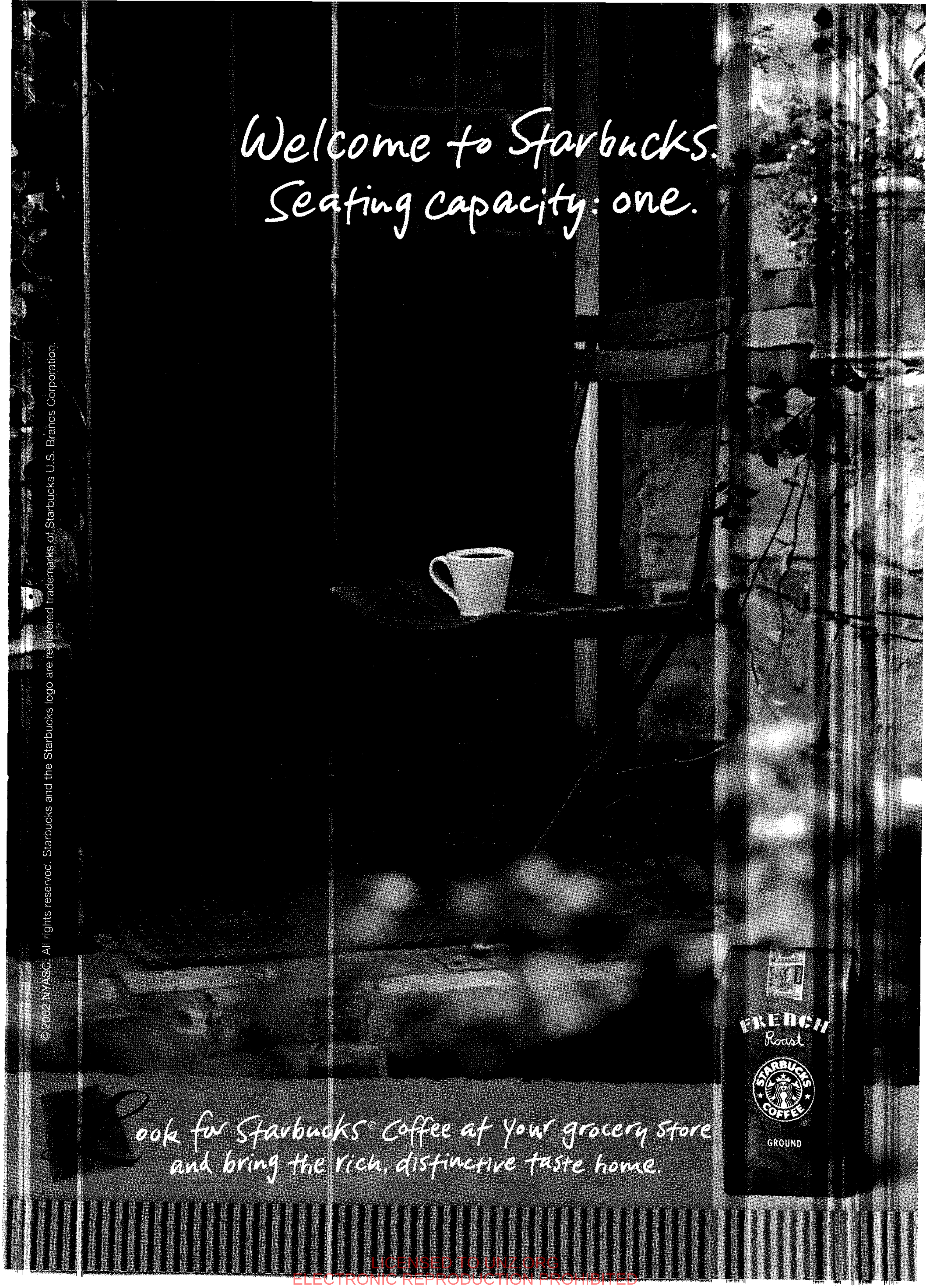
BLUE SMOKE
116 E. 27th St. (447-7733)—Barbecue aficionados are like baseball nerds or Elizabethan scholars: they know too much and have too many strong opinions. By opening this upscale barbecue joint, off Park Avenue South, Danny Meyer, the man behind Union Square Café, is just asking for trouble.

Blue Smoke certainly smells right, despite an elaborate ventilation system and a neighbor-friendly smokestack fifteen stories up. A half-cord of split applewood stands outside the kitchen doors, ready for the smoker. Nonetheless, the place has the feel of a chain restaurant in a converted warehouse on the outskirts of Toronto. Maybe it's the waitstaff's Blue Smoke T-shirts, made by Timberland and offered for sale alongside bottles of the house barbecue sauce, or the restaurant's proximity to the global headquarters of Credit Suisse First Boston, which appears to be supplying much of the clientele.

Meyer seems to want to make barbecue pristine; instead he's made it prissy. You get dishrags for napkins, but nothing sloppy enough to justify putting them to use. The ribs are smoked for seven hours. Whether that's too much or too little, they're as dry and drab as ham (not that there's anything wrong with ham). The hot links and pickles come neatly sliced. The brisket is parched, the pulled pork moist but underpulled. "Oh, you have to try the macaroni and cheese," a waitress said, and it turned out to be just a cut above Kraft (not that there's anything wrong with that, either). Coleslaw, pit beans, creamed spinach, collard greens: they are what they are. The foie gras with jalapeño marmalade made momentary sense only because Prince's "Raspberry Beret" happened to be playing on the jukebox, but it revealed itself to be fey once the Meters kicked in.

It doesn't seem right to complain about a place where you can gorge on plates of meat and pints of beer, start off with fry bread and finish with banana-cream pie. But truth is, while bad barbecue can be fine in the way that even the worst hot dogs or milkshakes usually are, mediocre barbecue that is expensive and pretentious is no good at all. (Open daily for dinner. Entrées $12-$23.)

—*Nick Paumgarten*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straction, and Pop irony all at once), the pictures bespeak sophisticated ambitiousness bubbling at high heat. Through May 18. (Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 988-1623.)

Short List

VALERIE DEMIANCHUK
George Adams, 41 W. 57th St. 644-5665.
Through May 18.

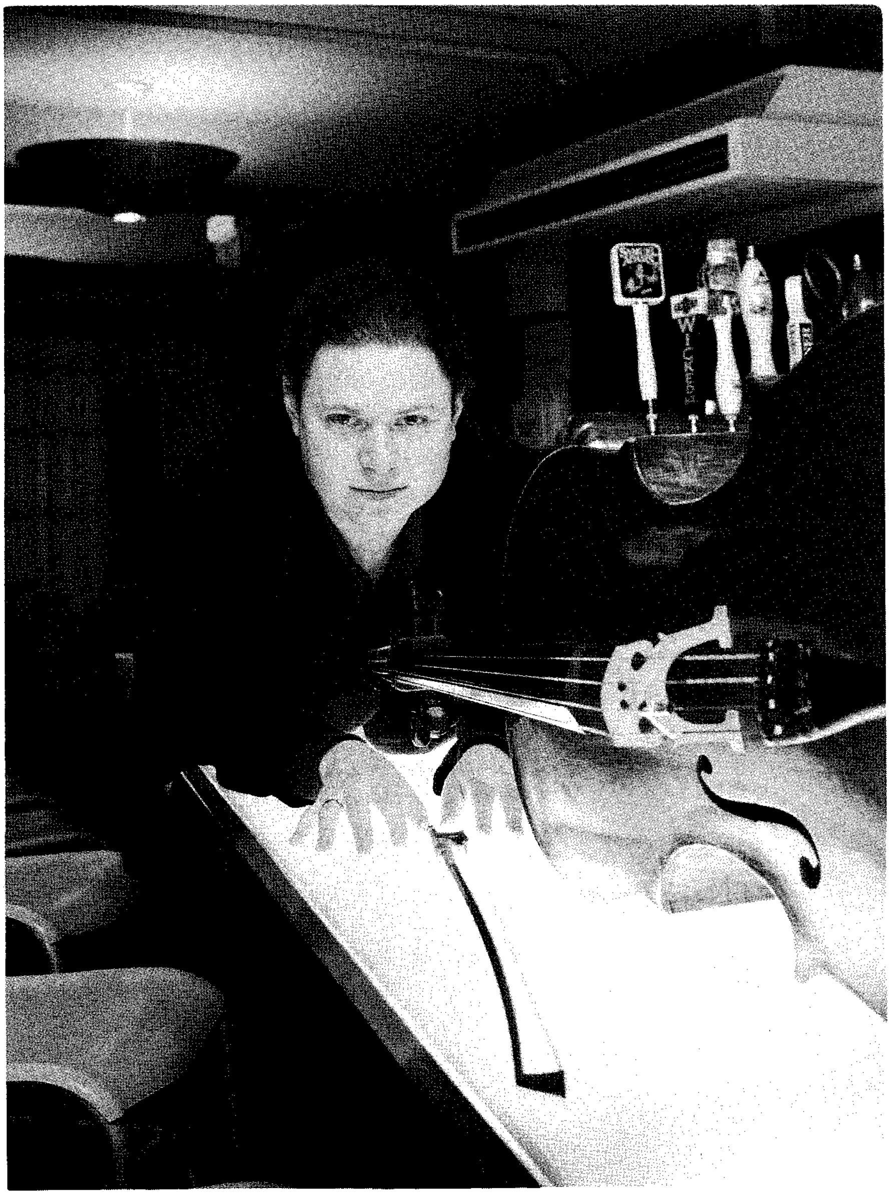
HONORÉ SHARRER
Spanierman, 45 E. 58th St. 832-0208.
Through May 11.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

RICHARD ARTSCHWAGER
At the age of seventy-nine, the master of furniture-inspired philosophical provocations—he raised Formica to fine-art glory in the nineteen-sixties—keeps inventing slyly crafted hybrids of thing and idea. Blocky plywood abstractions of chairs are covered with black-and-white photographs of real chairs with people in them; they wear illusions of internal space like skin. Wall works with bristling surfaces of rubberized horsehair are cutout shapes of cartoonish bodies in action. Spray-painted tints of gloomy, acrid color conjure pictorial depth, as in the image of a man apparently wrestling his shadow to the ground. These pieces seem ugly at first—and maybe at last, too—but while you're perusing them they are ferociously magical. Through May 4. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.)

HILARY BRACE
In this impressive début, Brace offers small black-and-white drawings of vast stratospheric events, the kind of things you might see from a jet porthole—sunbeams lancing through storm clouds, mountaintops poking through woolly glaciers, continents of cumulus tearing apart. Like her fellow graphic virtuosa Valerie Demianchuk (see Uptown—Short List), Brace pushes drawing to the point where it resembles, rivals, and sometimes outperforms black-and-white photography. Through May 11. (Thorp, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 691-6565.)

MILTON RESNICK
Revelatory paintings made between 1959 and 1963 by an underknown Abstract Expressionist. These dense allover fields of sensitive strokes, at times nearly monochrome but with fugitive hues, achieve a stylistic poise that echoes Monet water lilies and such different contemporaries as Philip Guston, Joan Mitchell, and even Jasper Johns. Resnick has made many dishearteningly muddy, glum paintings in his sixty-year career, but here everything is lyrically sombre and just grand. Through May 4. (Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 366-4774.)



The cellist Matt Haimovitz plays Bach at Makor on May 5 (see Classical Music).

KATHARINA BOSSE

JULIÃO SARMENTO
The Portuguese artist trades in his signature scratchy palimpsest paintings for large-scale soft-core black-and-white canvases depicting pairs of nubile women silhouetted in scenarios that could work as condom packaging. In one, a young woman fingers another's pearls, while across the room two nymphs share a Martini. Far more interesting is his slide-show paean to desire, set to music by the Brazilian-American composer Arto Lindsay. The images, all the artist's own snapshots, strike a mesmerizing balance between wistful and erotic. It's Sarmento's answer to Nan Goldin's "Ballad of Sexual Dependency." Through May 25. (Sean Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 239-1181.)

SUE WILLIAMS
The diva of new abstract painting came along a decade ago as a polemicist of female grievance, passed through a phase of wristily scribbled orgiastic fantasies, and arrived at a style of wide, liquid, speedy brushstrokes in bright colors on hard white grounds. Late de Kooning is an apparent but fully assimilated influence, as Williams's screechy pastel swaths make kinetic drama with every bend, loop, and veer. Heraldic to the eye, the works excite the body like a giant's caress. Also in the show are drawings that return, insouciantly, to past themes of teeming erotic scrimmage. No other current painter is both so visceral and such fun. Through May 18. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121.)

Short List

SUSAN ROTHENBERG
Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 431-4685.
Through June 1.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

ALFRED GUZZETTI
The French New Wave meets *National Geographic* in this spare show—one monitor, two videos, and a smattering of upholstered stools—by an experimental filmmaker who also shows up in the current Whitney Biennial. Both tapes are about ten minutes long and tinker with the travelogue genre, substituting enigmatic texts for traditional voice-overs. The first selection, which was shot in China, contrasts scenes of pastoral tranquillity with urban bustle (one particularly memorable image shows couples swing dancing in a subway tunnel). The second is faster paced and more evocative, splicing together a series of scenes from exotic locations where, as one title observes, "the moon is the same, though the surroundings are not." Through May 4. (Location One, 26 Greene St. 334-3347.)

Short List

NANCY BALLIETT
Atlantic, 40 Wooster St. 219-3183.
Through May 11.

PHOTOGRAPHY

MARK STEINMETZ
Southern-style Lolitas recline on the country grass and drape themselves across the hoods of American cars while their adolescent male peers loosen their ties and puff on filtered cigarettes. The straightforward black-and-white images show a noble and sensual version of Southern youth that's in synch with the regional work of other photographers, such as Ralph Eugene Meatyard or Sally Mann, but Steinmetz's work is free of Surrealist and romantic devices. Through May 4. (Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

MARIAN ROTH
Roth turned a 1986 Dodge Caravan into her camera, making daylong exposures through a pinhole. Her views of orchards, Adirondack chairs, and seaside shacks can look like split seconds of terror. Even the most beautiful and benign beach shots come off as haunting memories. Somehow, the power comes

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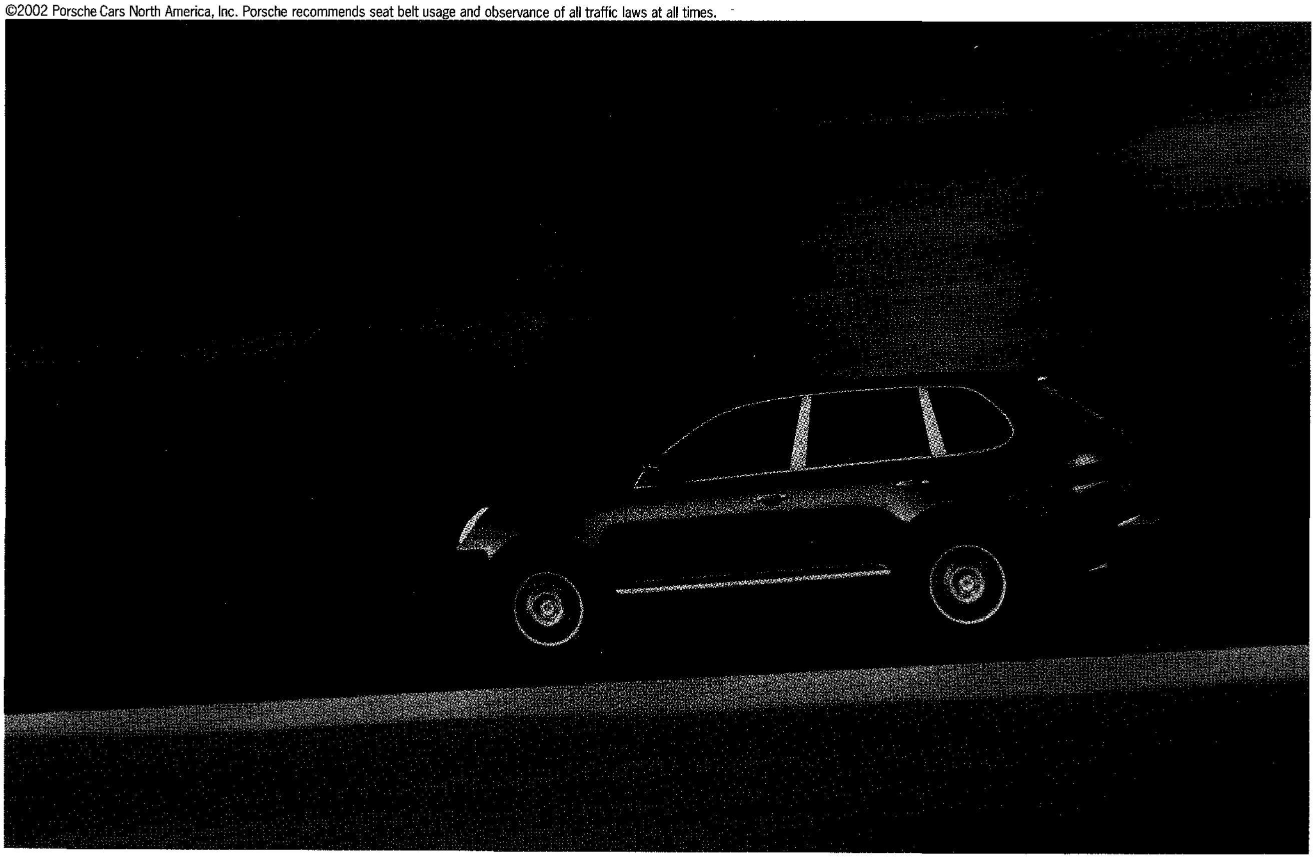

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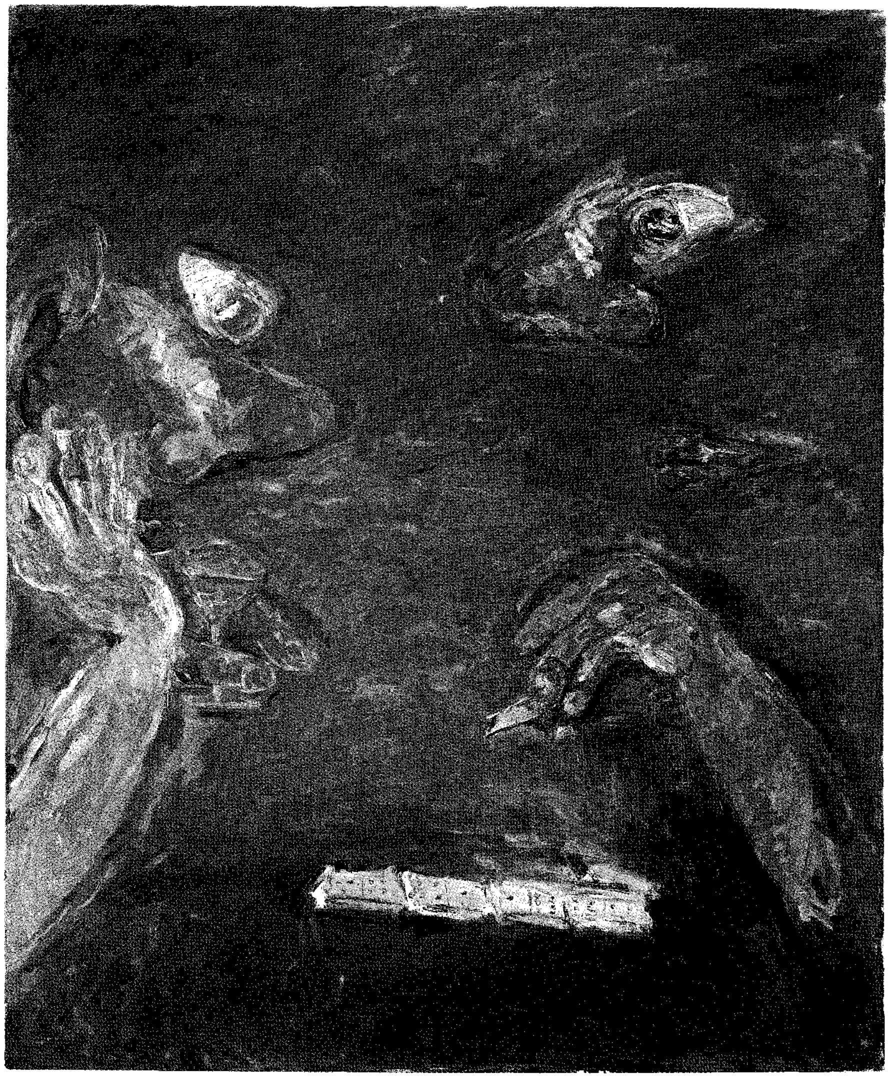


RANCH LIFE *Susan Rothenberg inaugurates Sperone Westwater's new West 13th Street gallery with her first New York show in five years. The paintings derive from life on her New Mexico ranch. Some focus on gawky, ominous animals. Others represent games of dominoes with fragmented images of hands, eyes, and noses in profile. Jarring compositions and some violent color (phthalo green, crimson) create pictorial stresses that only Rothenberg's prodigious brushwork can subdue. She keeps proving to herself—and, incidentally, to us—that she has what it takes. As usual with her, works that seem rough and weird at first will start looking like masterpieces the next time you see them.—Peter Schjeldahl*

from the innate honesty of the low-tech gear: the ghostly blurs and the eerie light in the supersaturated prints are not digital manipulations, but one-of-a-kind records of what really happened. Through May 18. (Bateman, 560 Broadway. 925-7951.)

"FLORA"
This smart group show about the use of flowers in photography begins in the twenties with Karl Blossfeldt's scientific studies and ends with two arrestingly sexual cibachromes by Araki. Everything in between—classic pieces by Tina Modotti and Sally Mann and lesser-known work by Consuelo Kanaga and Seiichi Furuya—traces how the treatment of flowers went from scientific closeup to Surrealism to a metaphor for the body. Through May 23. (Cook, 1063 Madison Ave., at 80th St. 737-3550.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 857-0000—**"Dream Street: W. Eugene Smith's Pittsburgh Photographs."** In 1955, Smith went AWOL from *Life* (where he was a staff photographer) to begin a three-week freelance assignment that turned into the creative odyssey that defined his work and in the process turned him into an almost allegorical figure to his fans: the artist as lonely hero. This exhibition of 190 images documents the artist's obsession with the city's factories, streets, and people. Smith made more than seventeen thousand steel-town images, at the expense of his personal, professional, and financial stability; of the thousands he printed, only a few were published at the time. Some, like the title work, "Dream Street" (of a listing car in an overgrown alley), have provided a bittersweet, largely posthumous justification for his heroic efforts by becoming classics. Through June 16. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
May 3 at 10:15 A.M.: The first of four sessions of a sale of prints includes works by Sloan, Prendergast, Tamayo, and Gauguin. ♦ May 3 at 2: A wide range of prints and ceramics by such artists as Rouault, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Picasso. The highlight of the session is a complete portfolio of Matisse's "Jazz," from 1947 (estimated to sell for approximately half a million dollars). ♦ May 4 at 10:15 A.M.: The third session, mostly of American prints, includes works by Frankenthaler, Johns, Guston, and Lichtenstein. ♦ May 5 at 2: The sale concludes with a selection of works by such artists as Rauschenberg, Richter, Marden, and Warhol (including a complete portfolio of the "Marilyn" series, from 1967, estimated to bring up to three hundred thousand dollars). (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
May 1 at 10 A.M. and 2: Prints from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including works by Bellows, Chagall, and Escher. ♦ May 7 at 7: The first session of a two-day sale of Impressionist and modern art. Among the highlights are two works never offered at auction before, Brancusi's "Danaïde," a bronze circa 1913 (estimated to bring up to ten million dollars), and "Les Courses," an early painting by Picasso. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

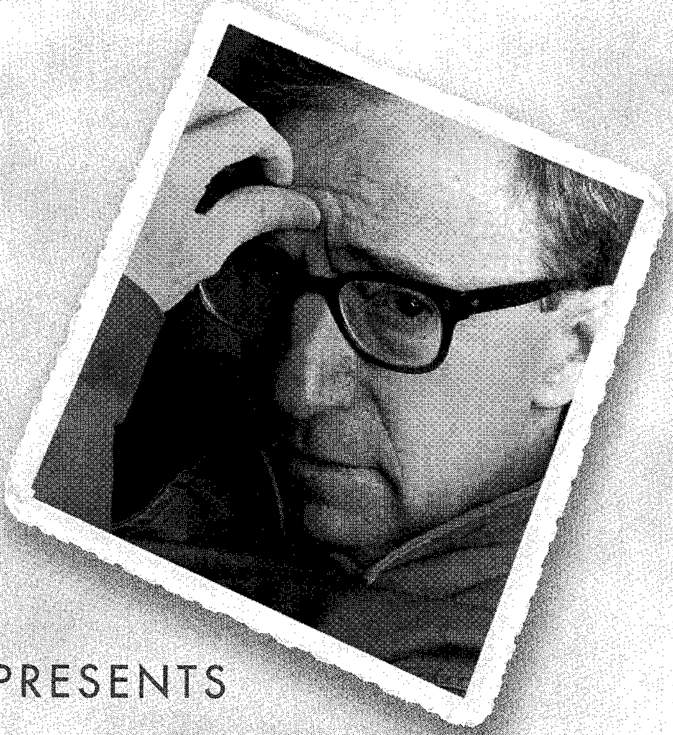
METROPOLITAN OPERA
"Rigoletto," with Maureen O'Flynn, Frank Lopardo, and Leo Nucci (in the title role); Plácido Domingo conducts. (May 1 at 7:30 and May 4 at 8.) ♦ Britten's 1960 adaptation of **"A Midsummer Night's Dream"** is not the Shakespeare you read in high school: with the text cut by half, the composer concentrates on the more sinister aspects of the play, especially Oberon and Tytania's strange competition over the possession of a "lovely boy stolen from an Indian King." Tim Albery's production, complete with Daliesque sets, is absurd but never silly, giving the characters a genuine human warmth that transcends the composer's occasionally cool tone. With Alexandra Deshorties (as Tytania), Susan Chilcott, Maria Zifchak, David Daniels (as Oberon), Paul Groves, Nathan Gunn, and Peter Rose; David Atherton. (May 2 at 8.) ♦ With Bejun Mehta replacing Daniels. (May 6 at 7:30.) ♦ The final performance of Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari's **"Sly,"** with Domingo, Cynthia Lawrence, and Juan Pons; Marco Armiliato. (May 4 at 1:30.) ♦ John Harbison's **"The Great Gatsby,"** with Dawn Upshaw, Jerry Hadley, Margaret Lattimore, and Lorraine Hunt Lieberson; James Levine. (May 3 at 8 and May 7 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA: "SHOWCASING AMERICAN COMPOSERS"
The company presents a series of open rehearsals of excerpts from new operas by such composers as Michael John LaChuisa and Lewis Spratlan (the Pulitzer Prize-winning "Life Is a Dream"). The vocalists include Valerie Komar and Marcus DeLoach; Daniel Beckwith and George Manahan conduct. (Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew, West End Ave. at 86th St. April 30, May 1-2, and May 7 at 4. No tickets required. Through May 9.)

AMATO OPERA
The feisty East Village chamber company closes its season with a production of **"Carmen,"** directed and conducted by Anthony Amato. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. May 4 at 7:30 and May 5 at 2:30. Through June 2.)

MIKEL ROUSE'S "DENNIS CLEVELAND"
Rouse's piece, a limpid, seamless flow of scenes based on dance rhythms, sounds like the work of a modern-day Rameau, with funk beats, African polyrhythms, and Reichian tape loops replacing the courtly sweep of gavottes and minuets. But if the French master aspired merely to entertain, Rouse has loftier ambitions: his real-time "talk-show opera" is an "Elmer Gantry"-like exposé of the vacuity and voyeurism of modern television culture. Rouse plays the show's host, a Jerry Springer type with a mystical streak; other cast members are placed in the audience or line up onstage as the show's guests. John Jesurun designed the set, complete with TV cameras, cue cards, applause signs (audience participation is essential), and the harsh glare of studio lighting. (John Jay Theatre, Tenth Ave. at 58th St. 721-6500. May 1-4 at 8 and May 4-5 at 3.)

Woody Allen takes on his most
elusive subject...Woody Allen.



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ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Colin Davis conducts Mozart's "The Abduction from the Seraglio," with Elizabeth Futral, Tracy Dahl, Kenneth Tarver, Richard Clement, Robert Lloyd, and John de Lancie (in the speaking role of Pasha Selim); the New York Choral Artists assist. (May 2 and May 6 at 8.) ♦ With Joyce Guyer, in her Philharmonic début, replacing Futral. (May 4 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500.)

KREMERATA BALTICA
As if he didn't already have enough to do, Gidon Kremer—the Latvian violin iconoclast and international concert nomad—founded this chamber orchestra in 1996 to help shape the careers of promising young musicians from the Baltic region. He leads the ensemble in two concerts at Carnegie Hall mixing new and classic works. May 1 at 8: "Russian Seasons," featuring recent works by Arvo Pärt and the young Russian-American polymath Lera Auerbach (the Suite for Violin, Piano, and String Orchestra, with Kremer, and with Auerbach as piano soloist). Tchaikovsky's "Souvenir de Florence" closes the program. ♦ May 2 at 8: "After Mozart," a concert based on the group's Grammy-winning recording, combines music by Mozart and Schubert (the String Quintet in C Major, arranged for string orchestra) with edgy pieces by Giya Kancheli, Alexander Raskatov, and Leonid Chizhik. (247-7800.)

THE MET ORCHESTRA
James Levine conducts Haydn's "The Creation," with the singers Hei-Kyung Hong, Ian Bostridge, and René Pape and the Metropolitan Opera Chorus. (Carnegie Hall. 247-4800. May 5 at 3.)

RECITALS

CHRISTINE SCHÄFER
The lissome German soprano performs a program of songs by Schumann ("Dichterliebe"), Schubert, and George Crumb ("Apparition," a hypnotic setting of Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd"). (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. May 1 at 8.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG
"Killer B's," a mess of songs by Barber, Berlin, Bernstein, Blitzstein, and Bowles. The singers include Amy Burton and John Hancock; Steven Blier is the pianist and host. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 646-230-8382. May 1 at 8.)

NEW YORK PHILOMUSICA
John Harbison has a gift for setting poets (like Hardy, Bishop, and William Carlos Williams) whose plainspoken affability hides layers of darkness and depth. Janice Felty performs the première of "Aria," his latest Bishop cycle, with members of the ensemble in a recital that also includes music by Brahms (the Piano Quintet) and Reich. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. May 2 at 8.)

MILLER THEATRE
May 2 at 8: In a free concert, the Bang on a Can All-Stars perform premières by Eve Beglarian, John King, and Matthew Shipp in addition to music by Louis Andriessen ("Workers Union") and Evan Ziporyn. ♦ May 4 at 8: The composer-pianist Terry Riley, the West Coast's minimalist guru-in-residence, appears with the rest of his trio (the violinist Tracy Silverman and the saxophonist George Brooks) for an evening of improvised music. (Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799.)

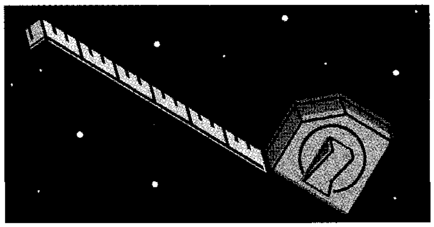
FAZIL SAY
Three Haydn sonatas pave the way for a program that concludes with music by Gershwin (including the Three Preludes) and by Say himself, a young Turkish pianist of extraordinary power. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. May 3 at 8.)

THE SILK ROAD PROJECT
Yo-Yo Ma and his Silk Road Ensemble—playing a plethora of Western and non-Western instruments—come to Carnegie Hall for a sequence of concerts, talks, and educational events celebrating the musical ties between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, including several commissioned works. May 4 at 8: Music by composers from Iran, China, and Uzbek-

BOOK CURRENTS

Across the Universe

If the universe is infinite, then its possibilities are infinite as well. But in **HOW THE UNIVERSE GOT ITS SPOTS** (Princeton) the astrophysicist Janna Levin insists that infinity works as a hypothetical concept only, and that it is not found in nature. "Tormented," Levin writes of those who ponder the largest questions of existence, and she wonders whether such mental strain causes madness. The Pythagoreans drowned wayward members. Newton stabbed himself in the eye with a tiny dagger while staring at the sun. And Levin herself tries to grasp the finer points of astrophysics as she struggles with her relationship with a musician boyfriend whose temperament does not always match her own. Knowledge can bring alienation, but comfort and connection, too. She writes, "We often understand math when plain English simply isn't as useful."



When Alexander the Great met the Celts on the banks of the Danube in the fourth century B.C., he asked their chieftains what frightened them most. "We fear only that the sky will fall on our heads," Marcelo Gleiser relates in **THE PROPHET AND THE ASTRONOMER** (Norton). Gleiser's book is a careful amalgam of philosophy, physics, and astronomy, tracing our contemplation of the cosmos from the big bang to the big crunch. "Time," Gleiser writes, "is the absence of perfection," and mortality creates a desire for knowledge. The search for answers to unknowable questions places the prophet and the physicist on the same side. Both Levin and Gleiser credit Einstein for his help in reframing our relationship to the sky: he theorized that space is curved, because time and space conform to accommodate the constant of the speed of light. As such, as long as time allows, we are drawn toward illumination.

—Lauren Porcaro

STEPHEN SAVAGE

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istan (Dmitri Yanov-Yanovsky's "Night Music"), along with Debussy's Cello Sonata and traditional and classical music from Mongolia and Azerbaijan. ♦ May 7 at 8: Shostakovich's Piano Trio No. 2 closes a program that includes a work by the Chinese-American composer Chen Yi and classical music from Bukhara. (247-7800. Through May 10.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER: NED ROREM'S "ANOTHER SLEEP"
Since the beginning of his career as a song composer, Rorem has tended to choose texts on subject matter that, in his Quaker phrase, "speaks to my condition." But none perhaps speak so clearly as those for his newest cycle, which he wrote in memory of the organist and composer James Holmes, Rorem's partner for more than thirty years. The baritone Kurt Ollmann and the pianist Scott Dunn perform the world première of the piece (set to texts by such writers as Shakespeare, Sappho, and Julien Green), on a program that also features wind music by Mozart. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5788. May 5 at 5 and May 7 at 7:30.)

MATT HAIMOVITZ
A decade or so ago, this young Israeli-American cellist seemed to be enjoying a typical prodigy's career—except that music by contemporary renegades like Ligeti, Crumb, Mackey, and Machover kept popping up on his programs. Now, after getting a bachelor's at Harvard, experimenting with jazz improvisation, and generally getting off the fast track, he's touring the club circuit, with his new disks of the Bach Cello Suites stashed in the trunk of his hybrid car. The Suite No. 5 in C Minor anchors his program at Makor with the soprano Eileen Clark, which also features music by Osvaldo Golijov. (35 W. 67th St. 415-5500. May 5 at 8.)

KALICHSTEIN-LAREDO-ROBINSON TRIO
The piano trio teams up with the Juilliard String Quartet's Joel Smirnoff and Samuel Rhodes for a program of Mozart, Brahms (the Piano Quintet), and Leon Kirchner. (92nd St. Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500. May 7-8 at 8.)

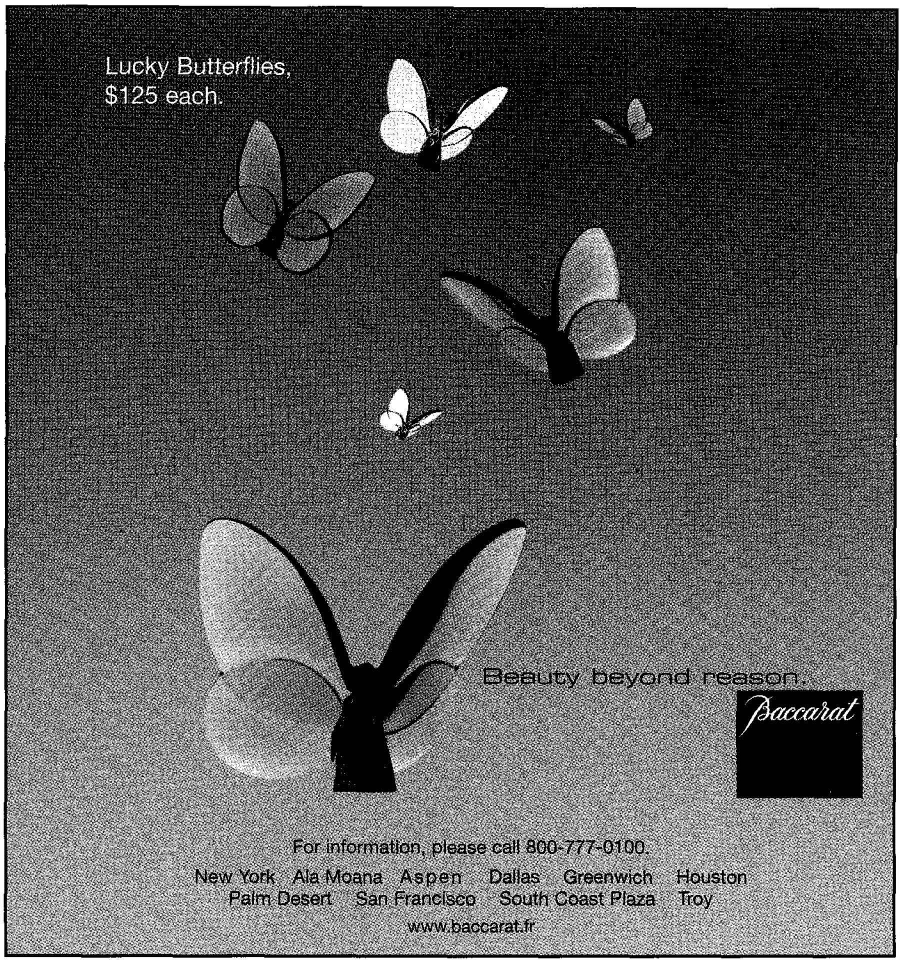
ABOVE AND BEYOND

DIG IT
Just about every hour of each day, the stridently eclectic New Jersey-based radio station WFMU fills the airways with everything from obscure Afro-pop to underground country to avant-garde jazz by giving its d.j.s the absolute freedom to choose what they want to play. Not everybody can work at the station, but twice a year, during its record fairs, anybody with a few dollars to spare can get a similar feeling. More than a hundred and fifty music dealers from various points on the globe lay out their old-fashioned LPs, 45s, and 78s, as well as CDs, for purchase. (Metropolitan Pavilion, 125 W. 18th St. For more information, call 201-521-1416, ext. 243. May 3 from 7 to 10 and May 4-5 from 10 to 7, with a special three-hour preview on the first evening, starting at 4.)

REACTION
One small casualty of September 11th was a program sponsored by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council that provided artists with free studio space in the World Trade Center. The proceeds from a weeklong art festival featuring works by painters, sculptors, photographers, and performers will help resettle city artists in new locations. (DNA Studio Gallery, 2174 Third Ave., at 118th St. 289-8959. May 3-10.)

READINGS
May 1 at 7:30: The Los Angeles-based writer Lisa Teasley reads from her short-story collection "Glow in the Dark." (Zinc Bar, 90 W. Houston St. 477-8337.) ♦ May 6 at 7:30: The poets Lee Ann Brown and Sarah Manguso read from their work. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ May 6 at 8: The "Writers in Performance Series" features William Kennedy, whose latest novel, "Roscoe," was recently published. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 399-3030.)

WALK
May 4 at 7:30 A.M.: The nonprofit advocacy group Shorewalkers presents the Great Saunter, its annual thirty-two-mile circumnavigation of Manhattan, starting at the corner of Fulton and Water Sts. For more information, call 330-7686.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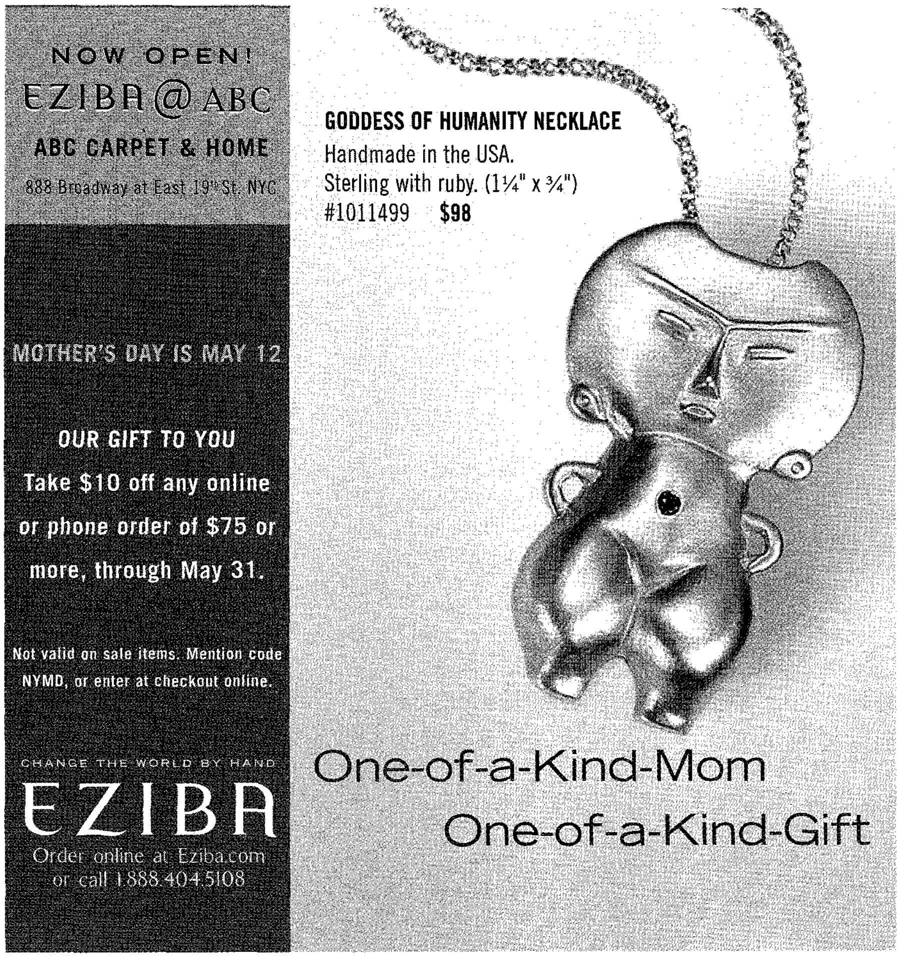
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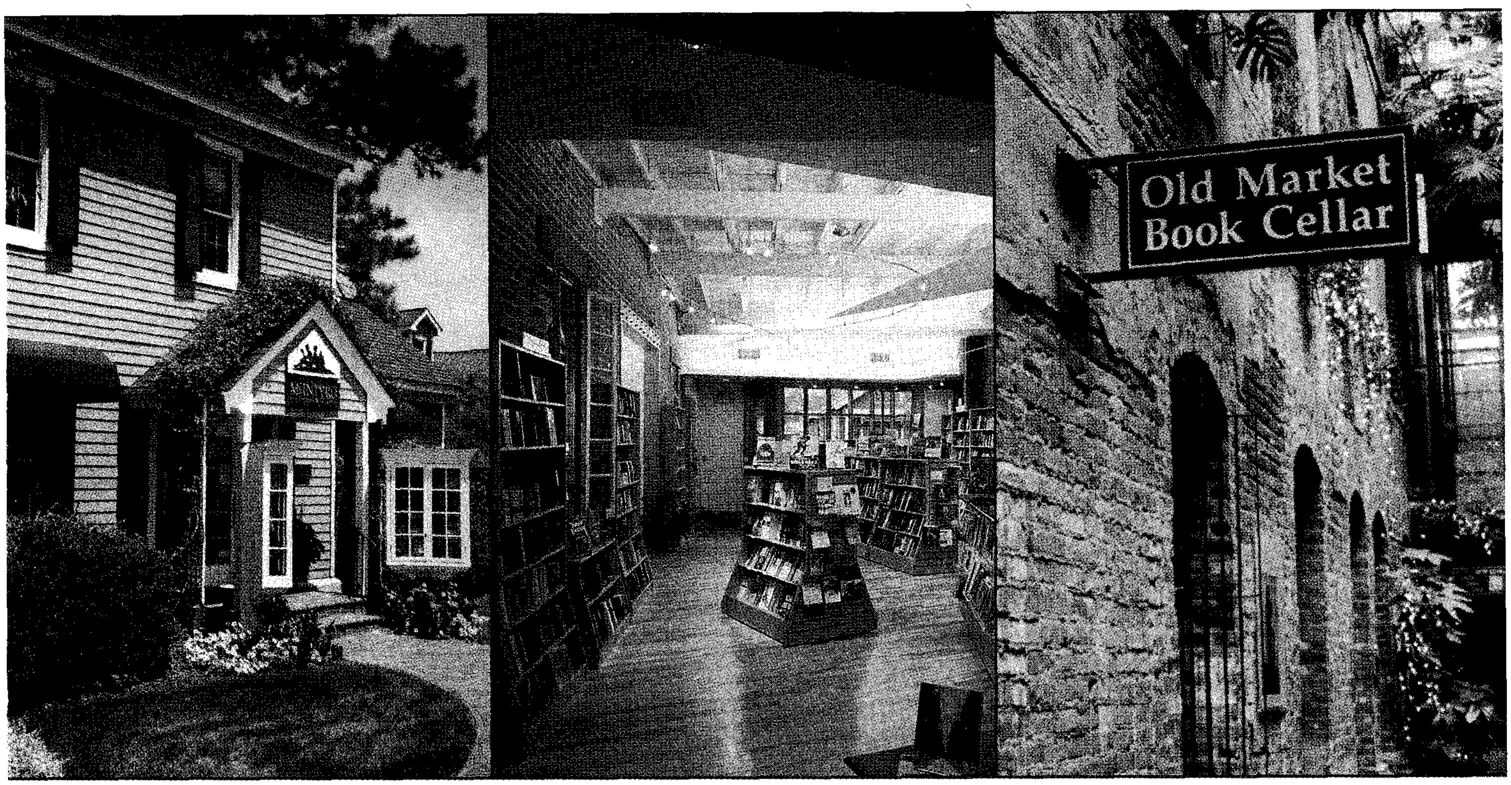


For advice on the latest literary offerings, consult the "Book Sense 76 Recommendation List" at your local independent bookseller. *Left to right:* McIntyre's Fine Books and Bookends in Fearrington Village in Pittsboro, North Carolina; Octavia Books in uptown New Orleans; and Old Market Book Cellar in the historic downtown district of Omaha, Nebraska.

GREAT GIFT IDEAS

BOUND TO PLEASE

FROM YOUR INDEPENDENT BOOKSELLERS

By Douglas Chilcott

If variety is the spice of life, books add more than a mere dash of flavor. From a scant twenty-six letters emerges a seemingly infinite variety of fresh stories, intriguing mysteries, and revealing histories. People both eccentric and conventional, as well as places both exotic and comfortingly familiar, take shape on the written page.

BOUND TO PLEASE

A scan of the latest crop of books reveals that, thanks to the power of imagination, we can anticipate plenty of entertainment embellished with new ideas, characters, and journeys. And this is precisely what makes a book such a transforming gift—for it is not merely the gift of an object but of an experience.

Of course, selecting the best gifts from the staggering number of books released each season can be daunting. Thankfully, independent booksellers across the country have already done a lot of the leg work, arriving at some informed ideas for Mother's Day, Father's Day, graduation, and lazy summer reading.

An independent bookseller often serves as the cultural hub and literary soul of a community. In addition to recommending good literature and sponsoring readings and book signings, a locally based bookseller also offers intangibles such as providing a welcoming environment that draws people to browse, peruse, and chat with others about the latest must-reads.

A prime example of how a bookseller can become an integral part of a community's fabric is **Square Books** in Oxford, Mississippi. With its readings and café, Square Books has become a meeting place for locals and has helped to revitalize the city's downtown courtyard square, made famous by William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County novels.

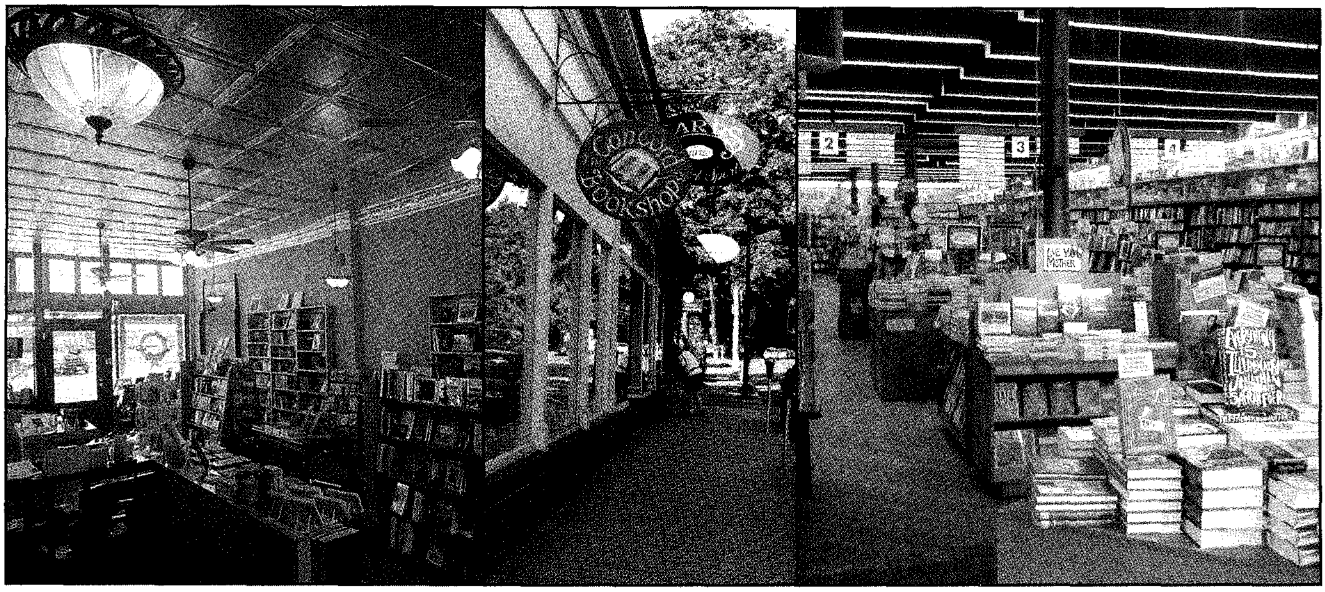


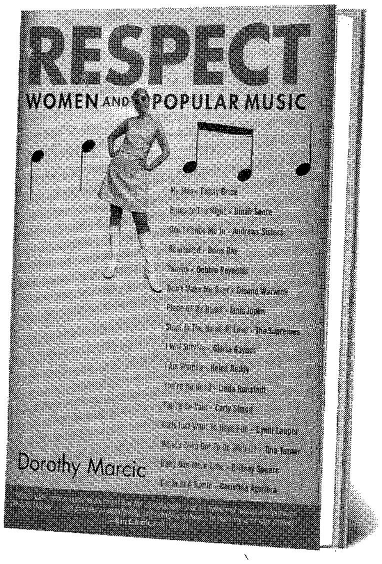
Photo far right: Kip Jacobson

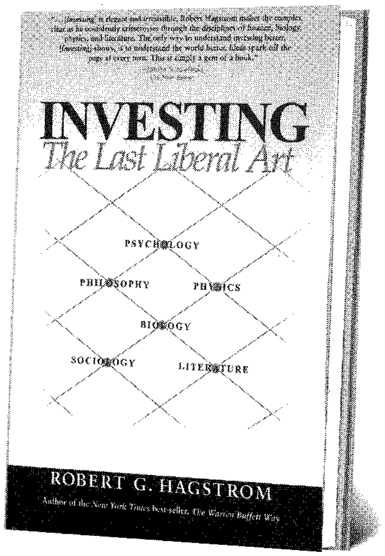
Independent booksellers strive to meet the needs of their communities. *Left to right*: Front Street Books in Alpine, Texas, features Texan literature; the inventory of Concord Bookshop in Concord, Massachusetts, reflects the town's literary heritage; and Brookline Booksmith in Brookline, Massachusetts, accommodates the diversity of its avid readers.

Few people have such a good take on what's new in books as do independent booksellers. Their insights are gathered bimonthly in the "Book Sense 76 Recommendation List," produced by Book Sense, the collective voice of more than twelve hundred independent booksellers nationwide. The following are some of the booksellers' latest selections, along with great gift recommendations from many of America's most prestigious publishers.

These books are made for readin'...
And that's just what you'll do.

[Go-Go boots optional]


RESPECT
WOMEN AND POPULAR MUSIC
Dorothy Marcic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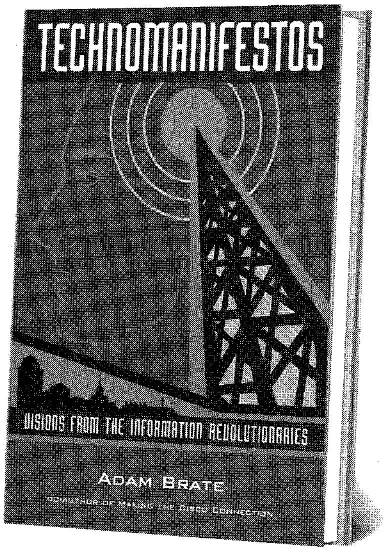
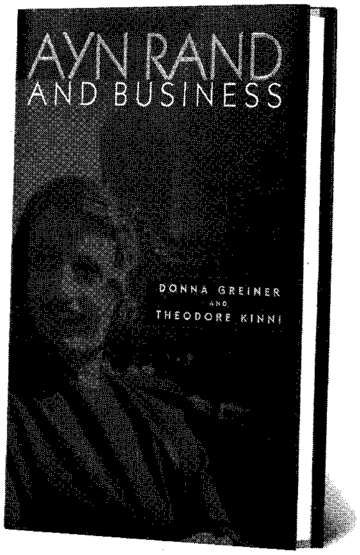

TECHNOMANIFESTOS
VISIONS FROM THE INFORMATION REVOLUTIONARIES
ADAM BRATE


AYN RAND
AND BUSINESS
DONNA GREINER
AND
THEODORE KINNI

Respect: *An entertaining look at the role of women in the 20th century through popular song.* ***Investing:*** *"A gem of a book." James Surowiecki, The New Yorker.* ***Technomanifestos:*** *A guided tour of the information revolution.* ***Ayn Rand and Business:*** *Because Atlas didn't shrug, he's in the corner office.*

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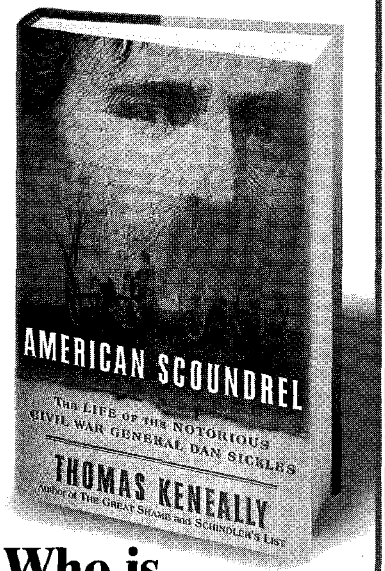
TEXERE

THOMAS KENEALLY
explores the
brilliant and bawdy life
of Civil War General
Dan Sickles


AMERICAN SCOUNDREL
The Life of the Notorious Civil War General Dan Sickles
THOMAS KENEALLY
Author of The Great Shame and Schindler's List

Who is
Dan Sickles?

consummate
politician

acquitted
murderer

brave and fierce
soldier

incorrigible
adulterer

forgotten
figure in
American history

An American original
made unforgettable
by Thomas Keneally

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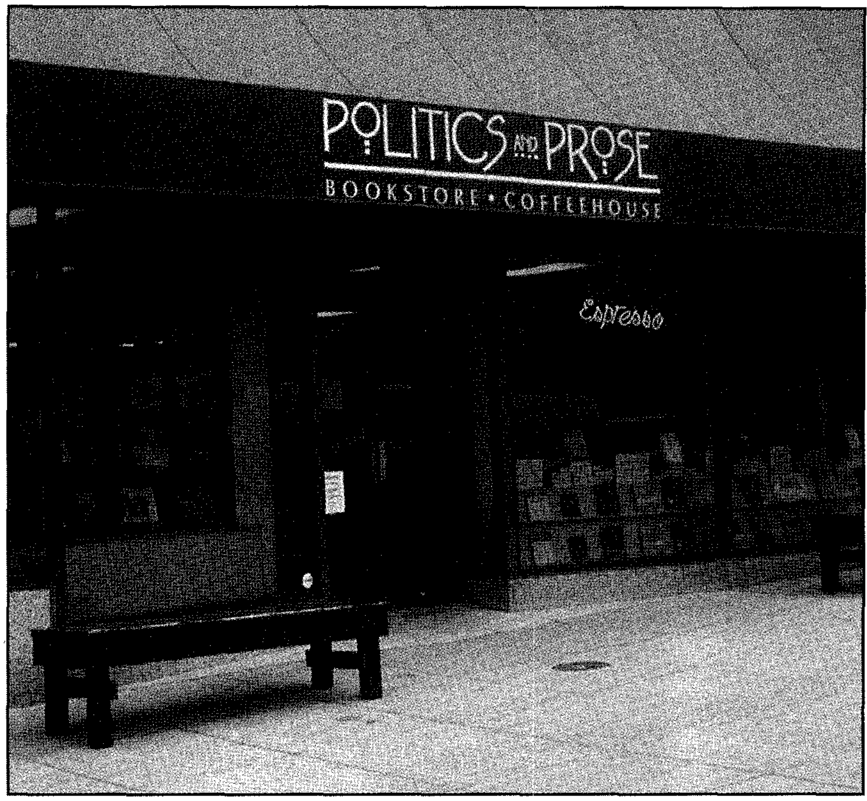
Mother and Child Reunion

Everyone forges their own unique relationship with their mother, and the mid-May celebration of Mother's Day is a time when recollections of family anecdotes abound. Several new books explore some of the subtleties and intricacies of the powerful bond between mother and child.



John Ray

Bibliophiles in Washington, D.C., view Politics and Prose Bookstore and Coffeehouse as a homey community center for browsing the latest titles and conversing over a cup of java.

The cultural chasm of the generation gap is just one of the obstacles confronted in Jean Thompson's "Wide Blue Yonder: A Novel" (Simon & Schuster). Elaine is an embittered divorcee struggling to coexist with her seventeen-year-old daughter, Josie, who is keen to skip town. Terry Flynn of **Third Place Books** in Lake Forest Park, Washington, admires this "sharp and entertaining novel with a clear eye

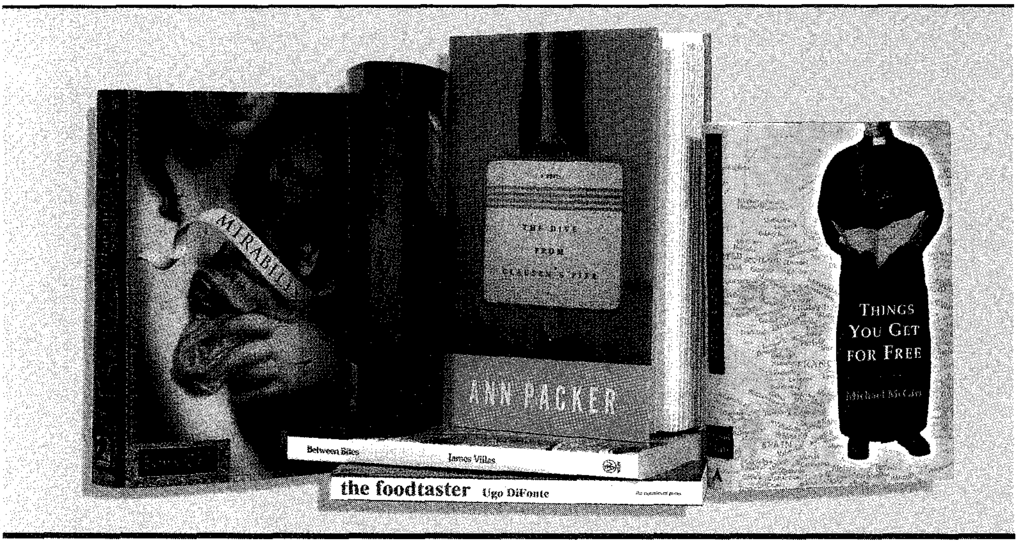
Publishers' Picks

From its initial radio transmission in 1926 to its present multichannel ownership of "must-see TV" offerings, NBC has earned a place in American cultural history. **Brought to You in Living Color: 75 Years of Great Moments in Television & Radio from NBC** by Marc Robinson (John Wiley & Sons) is a commemorative celebration of the network's history.

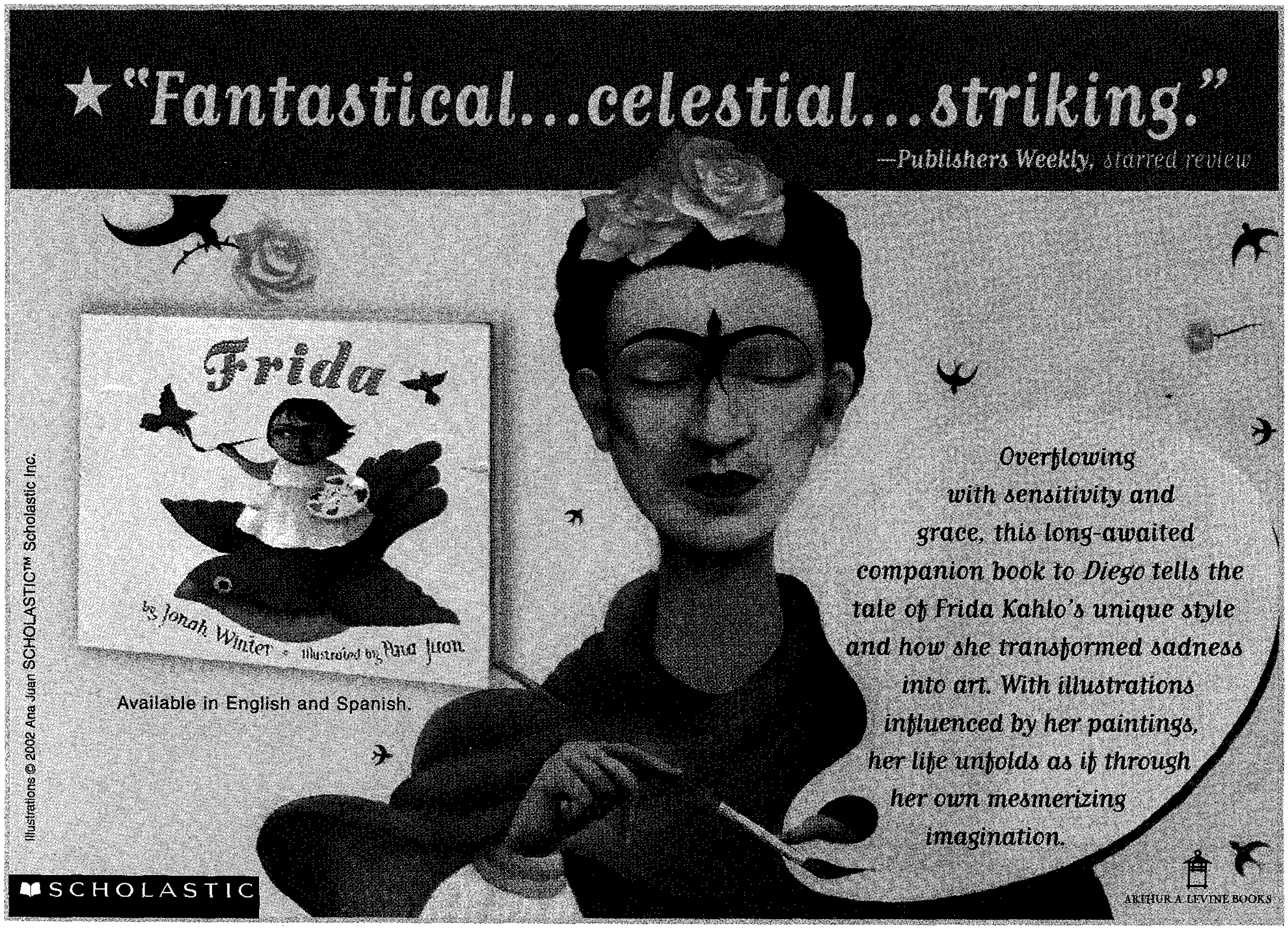
A thoroughbred of a bestseller now in paperback, **Seabiscuit** by Laura Hillenbrand (Ballantine Books) relates the riveting story of the most celebrated racehorse ever, the world it lived in, and the men who staked their lives and fortunes on its dazzling career.

toward everyday American life."

There are road trips and there are road trips. In "Things You Get for Free" by Michael McGirr (Atlantic Monthly Press), the Jesuit-priest author embarks from Australia on a six-week jaunt to Europe accompanied by his aging but indomitable mother. The charming travelogue of their adventures includes stops in places as varied as a pub, a tattoo parlor, and the Sistine Chapel. Margaret Poppe of **Books & Books** in Coral Gables, Florida, notes, "These musings on faith, family, friends, and assorted strangers are warm, witty, wise, and wonderful."


MIRABILIS
THE DIVE FROM CLAUSEN'S PIER
ANN PACKER
Between Bites
James Villas
the foodtaster
Ugo DiFonte
THINGS YOU GET FOR FREE
Michael McGirr

Joe Palmeri


★"Fantastical...celestial...striking."
—Publishers Weekly, starred review

Frida
by Jonah Winter · illustrated by Ana Juan

Available in English and Spanish.

Overflowing with sensitivity and grace, this long-awaited companion book to *Diego* tells the tale of Frida Kahlo's unique style and how she transformed sadness into art. With illustrations influenced by her paintings, her life unfolds as if through her own mesmerizing imagination.

Illustrations © 2002 Ana Juan SCHOLASTIC™ Scholastic Inc.

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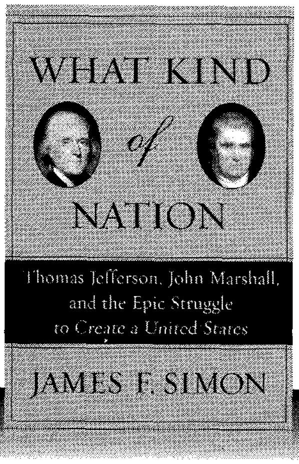
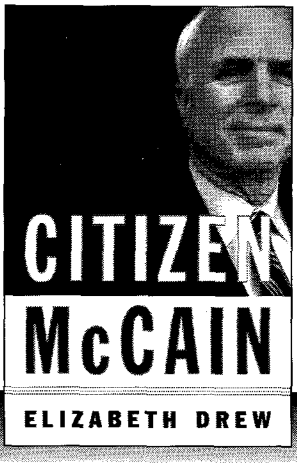
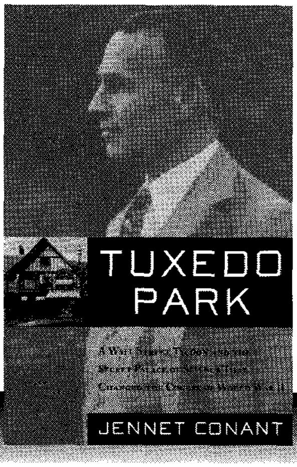
ARTHUR A. LEVINE BOOKS


WHAT KIND
of
NATION
Thomas Jefferson, John Marshall, and the Epic Struggle to Create a United States
JAMES F. SIMON

"A study of the political and legal struggle between these icons of American history...a major contribution...no small achievement."
—*The New York Times Book Review*


CITIZEN
McCAIN
ELIZABETH DREW

A portrait of one of the most intriguing people in American politics as told by a prize-winning reporter who has been granted unique, inside-access.


TUXEDO
PARK
JENNET CONANT

A dramatic account of World War II that traces one of the world's most extraordinary careers and scientific enterprises.

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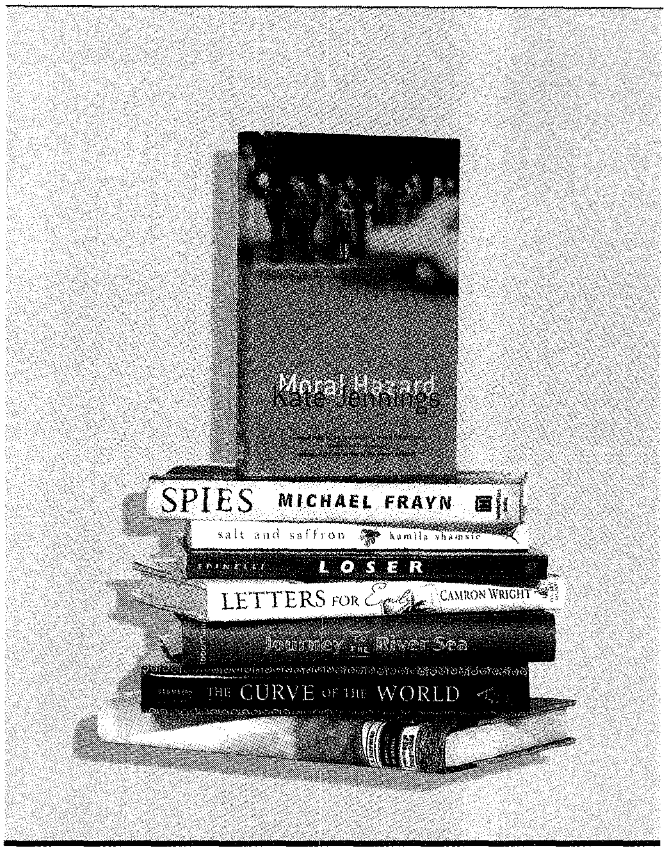
Novel Gifts

A broad range of new novels affords the reader many options to be transported to other times and unfamiliar situations.

Susann Cokal's "Mirabilis" (BlueHen Books) viscerally chronicles the series of miraculous events surrounding a voluptuous wet nurse in a medieval French village. Riddled by plague and religious fanaticism, the town reels with each twist in the brilliantly orchestrated plot. Notes Marjorie Darraugh of **Pegasus Books** in Berkeley, California, "The hauntingly sensual evocation of time and place in Cokal's story embodies what's best in historical fiction."

A headfirst plunge into shallow water sets in motion the emotional dilemma of "The Dive from Clausen's Pier" by Ann Packer (Alfred A. Knopf). Faced with the prospect of remaining in her Wisconsin town to care for a fiancé she's not sure she still loves, Carrie visits a friend in New York to get some perspective. Amanda Tobier of **Third Place Books** in Lake Forest Park, Washington, found herself "infused with a story that had me pondering the 'conditions' of unconditional love, and the expectations one assumes of friendship and family. I loved the metaphor of sewing and crafting clothes; as Carrie rips apart the seams of her relationships, she painstakingly creates a new persona with fabric."


Moral Hazard
Kate Jennings
SPIES MICHAEL FRAYN
salt and saffron kamila shamsie
SPINELLI LOSER
LETTERS FOR Emily CAMRON WRIGHT
Journey to the River Sea
THE CURVE OF THE WORLD

Joe Palmeri

Eating Our Words

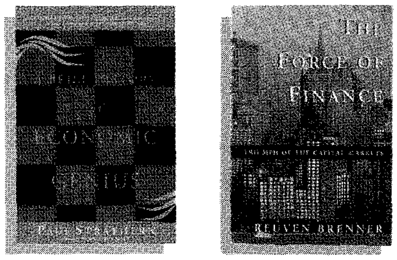
In the right hands, the language of food is as enticing as the dishes themselves. These two gift ideas are guaranteed to satisfy the literary appetites of gourmets and connoisseurs alike.

Going behind the scenes of a regal sixteenth-century ducal court, "The Foodtaster" (The Permanent Press) is a book that purports to have been written by an Italian peasant, Ugo DiFonte. But this memorable portrait of a man for whom food offers both pleasure and peril is actually a novel by Peter Elbling. Bob Deloria of **Books Inc. in Laurel Village** in San Francisco describes the book as "a tour de force—a funny and moving tale of a man caught up in matters beyond his control, who makes the best of what could be a bad situation."

James Villas served as the food and wine editor of *Town & Country* for more than twenty-five years. Now he's dishing it out delightfully in "Between Bites: Confessions of a Hungry Hedonist" (John Wiley & Sons). Jim Tenney of **Olsson's Books and Records** in Washington, D.C. notes, "Trenchermen and gourmands will both enjoy this irascible book, replete with recipes and chapters on the great *cuisiniers*: Paul Bocuse, Craig Claiborne, and Julia Child. A delightful read by a highly heretical hedonist."

Life 101

Now that their class work is complete, new graduates enter one of the most challenging of courses: life itself. While the syllabus for the course remains undetermined, several new

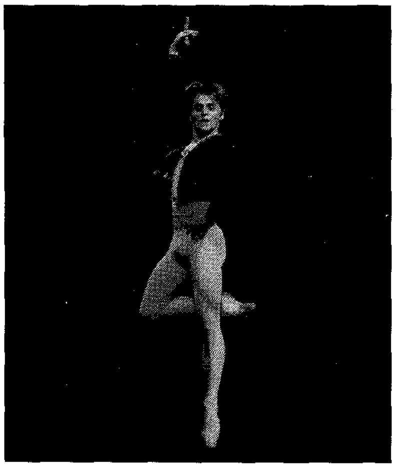

A Brief History of Economic Genius
Paul Strathern
The Force of Finance
Triumph of the Capital Markets
Reuven Brenner

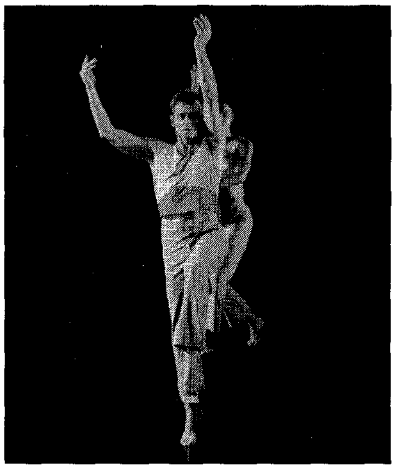
Publishers' Picks

A Brief History of Economic Genius by Paul Strathern (Texere) provides an entertaining and accessible introduction to some great economic and mathematical minds. Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and John Maynard Keynes are revealingly represented, as is eccentric John Nash of "A Beautiful Mind" fame.

From feuding about ethics with Vladimir Nabokov to playing chess with Marcel Duchamp to flirting with Marlene Dietrich, economist Alexander Gerschenkron led an incredible life. His grandson Nicholas Dawidoff chronicles his story in **The Fly Swatter: How My Grandfather Made His Way in the World** (Pantheon Books).

Arguing that open capital markets are the most potent tool for democracy building, Reuven Brenner's **The Force of Finance: Triumph of the Capital Markets** (Texere) provides a thoughtful perspective on the current state of world affairs.





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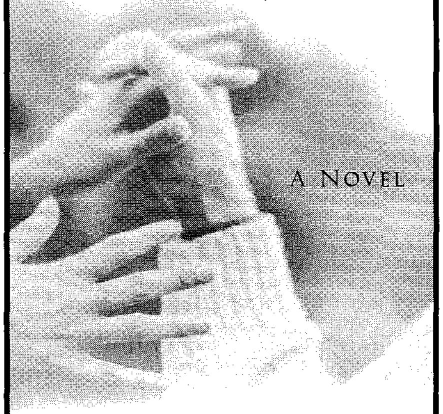
Spilling
Clarence



A NOVEL

ANNE URSU

"[A] warm, playful, magical first novel...Slowly, charmingly, painfully, *Spilling Clarence* unfolds dimensions of how our past and presents intermingle, how our dreams and memories feed off each other. No scalpel can touch the truths Ursu locates." —*Philadelphia Inquirer*

"Wonderfully original...this whimsical, bittersweet debut suggests the stories of our lives are what save us." —*Us Weekly*

"Ursu does a wonderful job in this imaginative and charming novel. She knows the best we can wish for her characters—and ourselves—is a life without regret." —*New Orleans Times-Picayune*

photo credit: John J. Ursu

THEIA

A Book Sense 76 Pick™
An imprint of Hyperion Books
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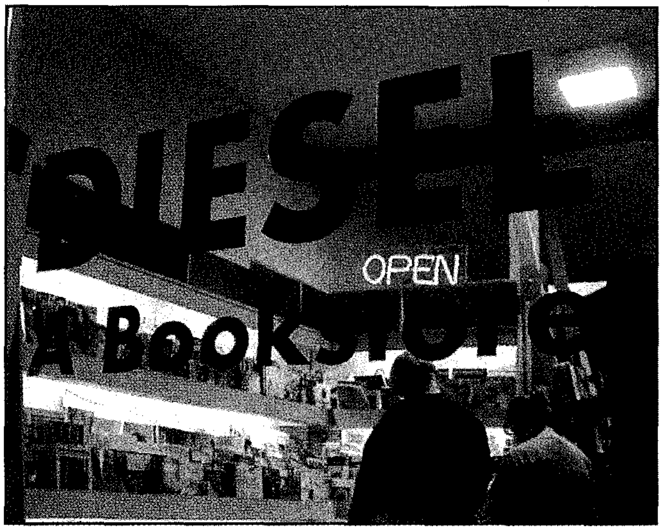


Diesel, A Bookstore in Oakland, California, has won over the Rockridge neighborhood with its inviting urban aesthetic and smart literary selections.

titles convey some of life's singular insights.

In a case of Dickensian reinvention, John Scott Shepherd's "Henry's List of Wrongs" (Rugged Land) relates the redemptive tale of corporate executive Henry Chase. An instance of rejection sends Chase on a lonely trajectory that destroys companies and lives. More than a decade later he comes to his senses and seeks to make amends. Katie Abbott of **Scott's Bookstore** in Mount Vernon, Washington, loves this twenty-first-century spin on "A Christmas Carol," noting how the novel "draws the reader into a week of apologies, knockout blows, greed, and a mysterious woman pushing Henry along the path to redemption. A funny, fast-paced story."

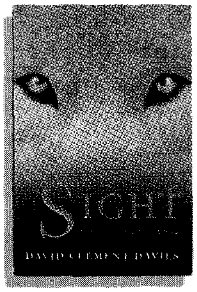
"Moral Hazard" by Kate Jennings (Fourth Estate) offers an equally compelling glance into the heart of corporate America. Calling it "one of those rare, subtle books that has more power

Powell's Books for Cooks and Gardeners in Portland, Oregon, stocks its shelves with specialty titles that are complemented by home décor gifts.

because of its understatement," Anne Whalen of **Brookline Booksmith** in Brookline, Massachusetts, savors the way Jennings explores challenging moral, political, and economic issues in a novel set around Wall Street.

Adjusting to real life after the often blithe atmosphere of a college campus can be challenging. In "Salt and Saffron" (Bloomsbury), author Kamila Shamsie captures the intricacy of such a struggle compounded by a cross-cultural divide. Calling it "pure enchantment," Herman Fong of **The Odyssey Bookshop** in South Hadley, Massachusetts, highly recommends this novel about a Pakistani woman who, returning home after completing college in America, must reconcile her heart's yearnings with her sense of familial responsibility. "Shamsie imbues the story with a fresh and uncommon lyricism, deliciously mingling drama, mystery, romance, history, and comedy, with a hint of Rushdie-esque wit and magic."

The time-honored tradition of passing wisdom down from generation to generation provides the compelling backdrop for "Letters for Emily" by Camron Wright (Pocket Books). Even as a grandfather succumbs to Alzheimer's, he leaves behind a thoughtful legacy. The moving book caught the eye of Jenny Lawton at **Just Books** in Greenwich, Connecticut, who notes: "This novel draws inspiration from a grandfather's lifetime of wisdom and love recorded through notes and poems to his granddaughter Emily."

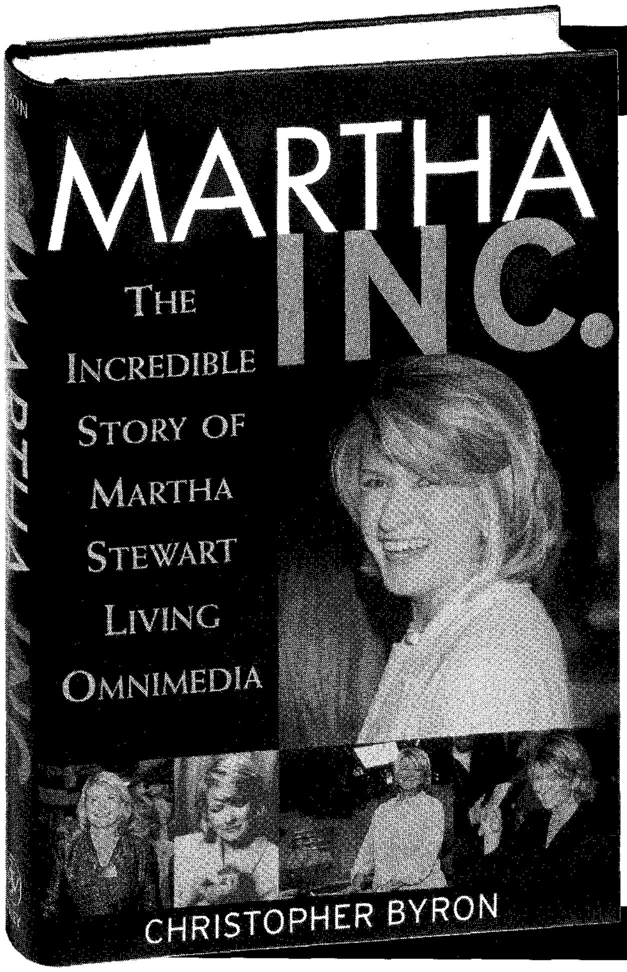


Publishers' Picks

The cold forests of Transylvania become the stark backdrop for **The Sight** by David Clement-Davies (Dutton Books). This animal fantasy relates the story of a pack of wolves protecting one of its new pups who has a powerful gift.

What if you could suddenly remember everything that ever happened in your life? Would it be a blessing—or a curse? **Spilling Clarence** by Anne Ursu (Theia/Hyperion) is a compelling story that explores this intriguing premise.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. discovered an historic manuscript at a recent auction. **The Bondwoman's Narrative** by Hannah Crafts, as edited by Gates (Warner Books), is a compelling story based on one woman's flight from slavery. It may be the earliest novel written by a black woman.



PERFECT FOR MOTHER'S DAY!

"In this spectacular book, Christopher Byron gets all the way to the heart of Martha Stewart."

**—DAVID MCCLINTICK
author, *Indecent Exposure***

This compelling unauthorized biography presents the first three-dimensional view of Martha Stewart—the business, the person, and the personality.

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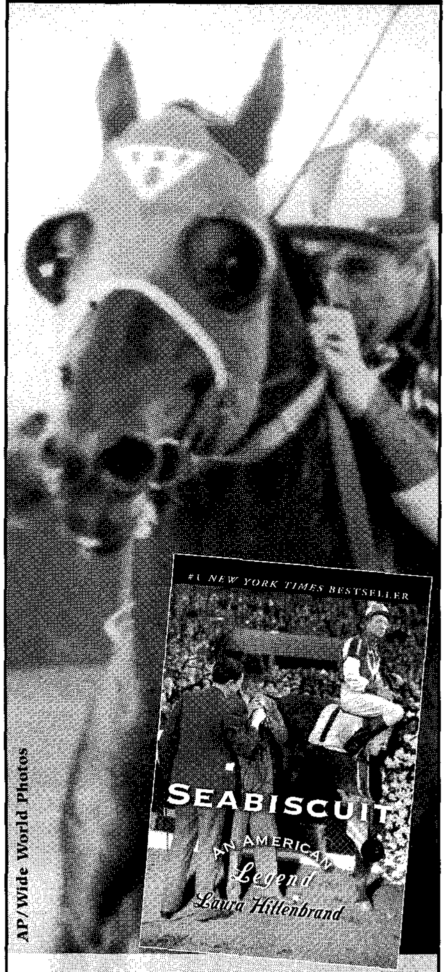
#1 *NEW YORK TIMES*
BESTSELLER

SEABISCUIT
AN AMERICAN LEGEND



AP/Wide World Photos

Laura Hillenbrand

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"Absorbing . . . A first-rate piece of storytelling, leaving us not only with a vivid portrait of a horse but a fascinating slice of American history as well." —*The New York Times*

"Remarkable...memorable... just as compelling today as it was in 1938." —*The Washington Post*

The guide's inside,
so it's perfect for your reading group.
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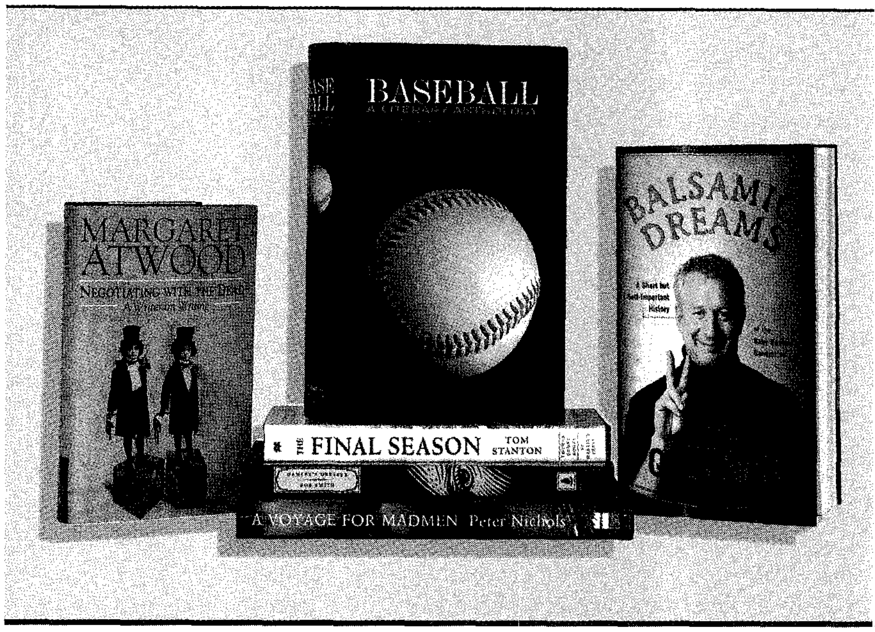


Joe Palmeri

Prose Panache

Aspiring writers can benefit from the insights of one of the masters of literary form with "Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing" by Margaret Atwood (Cambridge University Press). Pam Rosenthal of **Modern Times Bookstore** in San Francisco says, "These lectures on writing and the writer's life are delightful reading—not only for writers and would-be writers, but for all passionate readers as well."

Rarely if ever at a loss for words, the Bard remains an eternal inspiration to writers. "Hamlet's Dresser: A Memoir" by Bob Smith (Scribner) relates how Shakespeare's language transformed a boy's lonely childhood and shaped his entire life. "Witnessing the joy Shakespeare has brought to Bob Smith's life, and witnessing the ability of Shakespeare's language to resurrect memories for his students will inspire readers to start their own journey with Shakespeare, " says Roxanne Coady of **R.J. Julia Booksellers** in Madison, Connecticut.

Publishers' Picks

With enough charm and Tammany Hall connections, you can get away with murder. In **American Scoundrel: The Life of the Notorious Civil War General Dan Sickles** (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday), author Thomas Keneally relates how one man did.

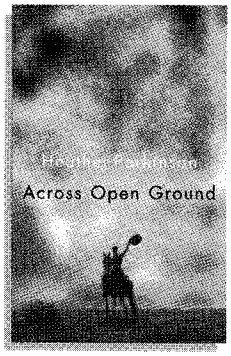
What's life like for the working poor in the land of plenty? Find out in Barbara Ehrenreich's **Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America** (Metropolitan/Owl Books), now in paperback.

Is autobiography the ultimate fiction? In **Enough About You: Adventures in Autobiography** (Simon & Schuster), David Shields explores the use and abuse of memoir and self-reflection.

Out of the Ballpark

Golf may have been the dominant theme of Father's Day gifts in recent years, but the storied legends of the baseball diamond resonate with the ties between father and child. In his new book, "The Final Season: Fathers, Sons, and One Last Season in a Classic American Ballpark" (Thomas Dunne Books), Tom Stanton explores the love affair with baseball and the Detroit Tigers that was passed down for generations in his family. Wyatt Young of **Drummer Boy Books** in Ligonier, Pennsylvania, considers the book a home run. "He touches all the bases in the final year at old Tiger Stadium, from fascinating interviews with former stars and fans to an emotional last game with his dad. This is a great book for anyone in the family."

Savoring the magic of a day at the ballpark, generations of great writers have committed their visions of the sport to paper. "Baseball: A Literary Anthology" edited by Nicholas Dawidoff (The Library of America) gathers an all-star roster. Says Will Peters of **Annie Bloom's Books** in Portland, Oregon, "Okay, so perhaps Malamud to Dillard to DeLillo may not form a great double-play combination, but they are representative of the writers assembled in this wonderful anthology. Along with the spare poetry of William Carlos Williams, life advice from Satchel Paige, and firsthand accounts from Jim Bouton and Bill Veeck, this fine collection will hold both baseball and literature lovers in thrall."

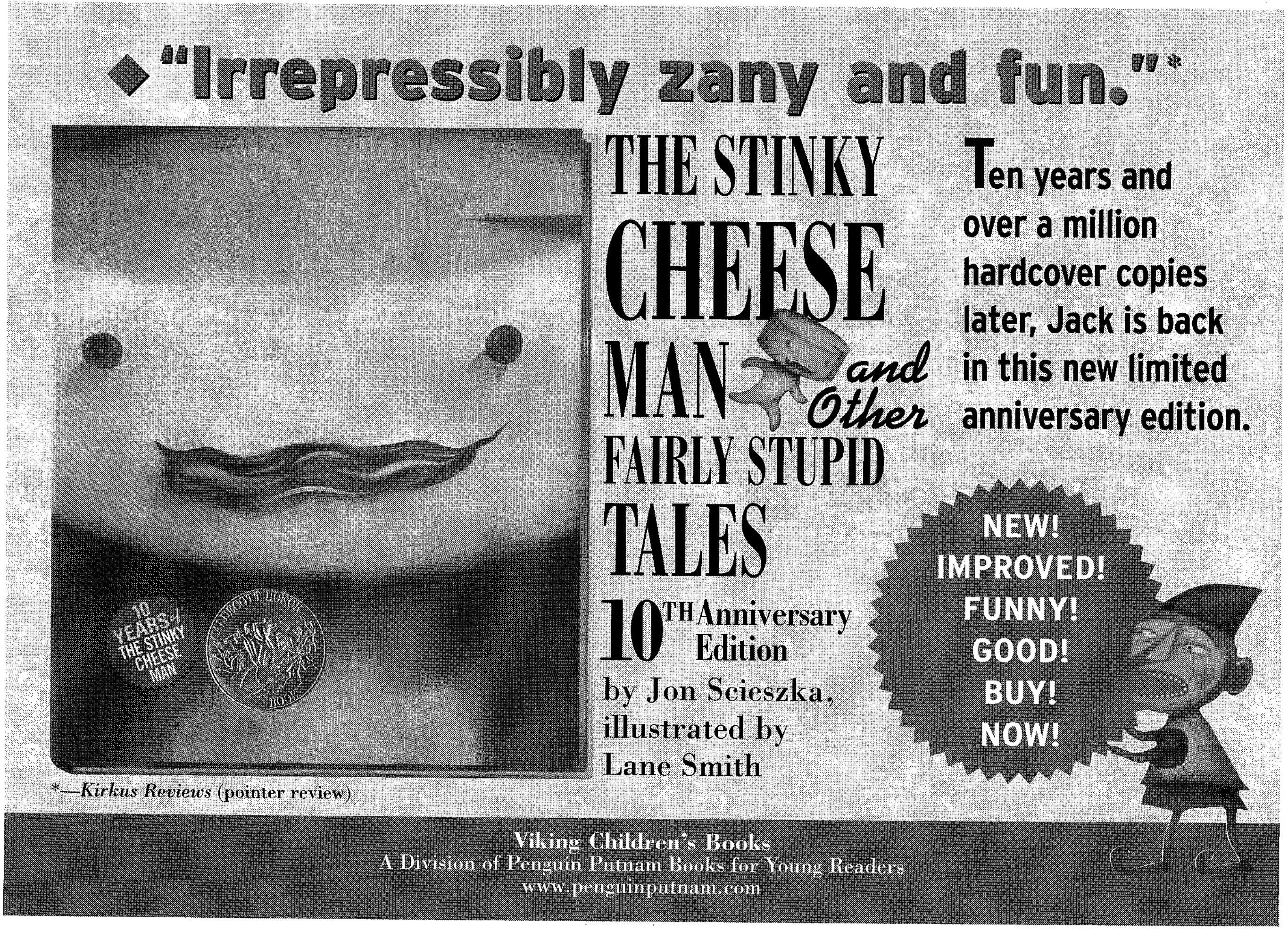


Publishers' Picks

A sheep herder in the American West falls in love just as the country begins its slow march into the First World War. **Across Open Ground** by Heather Parkinson (Bloomsbury) captures the yearnings of first love and the stark realities of war.

A triptych of modern love stories, **Three Junes** by Julia Glass (Pantheon Books) relates events involving a Scottish widower on a trip to Greece, his son (a gay man in New York who avoids entanglements), and the woman artist destined to change both their lives.

In Kate Walbert's **The Gardens of Kyoto** (Scribner Paperback Fiction), a young woman coming of age in the shadow of the Second World War recalls lost loves in a tale of war, romance, and grief.


◆ "Irrepressibly zany and fun."*

THE STINKY CHEESE MAN and Other FAIRLY STUPID TALES

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by Jon Scieszka, illustrated by Lane Smith

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*—*Kirkus Reviews* (pointer review)

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BOUND TO PLEASE

Offering excitement just as exhilarating as a bottom-of-the-ninth cliffhanger, "A Voyage for Madmen," by Peter Nichols (HarperCollins) depicts a rollicking round-the-world race. "The intensity and passion of the single-handed, non-stop race in 1968 by nine very different men in nine very different sailing vessels is captured in this compelling and fascinating book," notes Paul Haskins of **Village Books** in Bellingham, Washington. "With a novelist's ear and a sailor's vision, Nichols gives us the adventure book of the year."

Who doesn't benefit from a reality check now and then? You can give Dad one with "Balsamic Dreams: A Short but Self-Important History of the Baby Boomer Generation," by Joe Queenan (Picador USA). Derek McGann of **The Toadstool Bookshop** in Milford, New Hampshire, calls this one of Queenan's most vitriolic and hysterical books yet. "How did the generation that promised not to sell out end up wearing ponytails, listening to Billy Joel, and worrying about the quality of its balsamic vinegar? Hilarious."

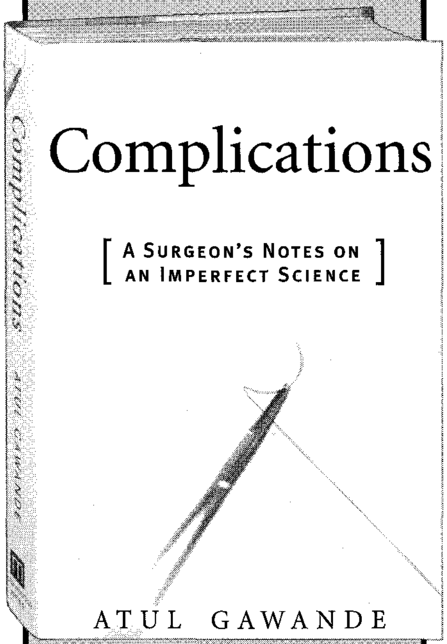
Inspired by Parisian bookstores, Old Market Book Cellar in Omaha, Nebraska, accentuates comfort in its gallery-like, custom-designed book rooms.

Mystery Madness

Whodunits can also be great gifts for Dad. In "Spies" by Michael Frayn (Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and Company), two boys in wartime England are convinced that one of their mothers is a German spy. Their discoveries as amateur gumshoes result in the revelation of some painful family secrets. Virginia Hobson Hicks of **Books on the Bluff** in Eulonia/Townsend, Georgia, appreciates the fact that "Frayn keeps

(continued)

"No one writes about medicine as a human subject as well as ATUL GAWANDE."*



"*Complications* is a book about medicine that reads like a thriller.... The reader is left breathless."
—Malcolm Gladwell,
author of *The Tipping Point*

"Gawande's prose, much like the scalpel he wields, is precise, daring, but never reckless."
—Abraham Verghese,
author of *My Own Country* and *The Tennis Partner*

"Atul Gawande is a rare and wonderful storyteller who portrays his profession with bravery and humanity."
—Ellen Goodman,
Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist

"Wise and exciting.... Medicine may be imperfect, but this book, I promise you, is anything but."
—Bill Bryson, A Book-of-the-Month Club Judge's Selection

*Adam Gopnik,
author of *Paris to the Moon*

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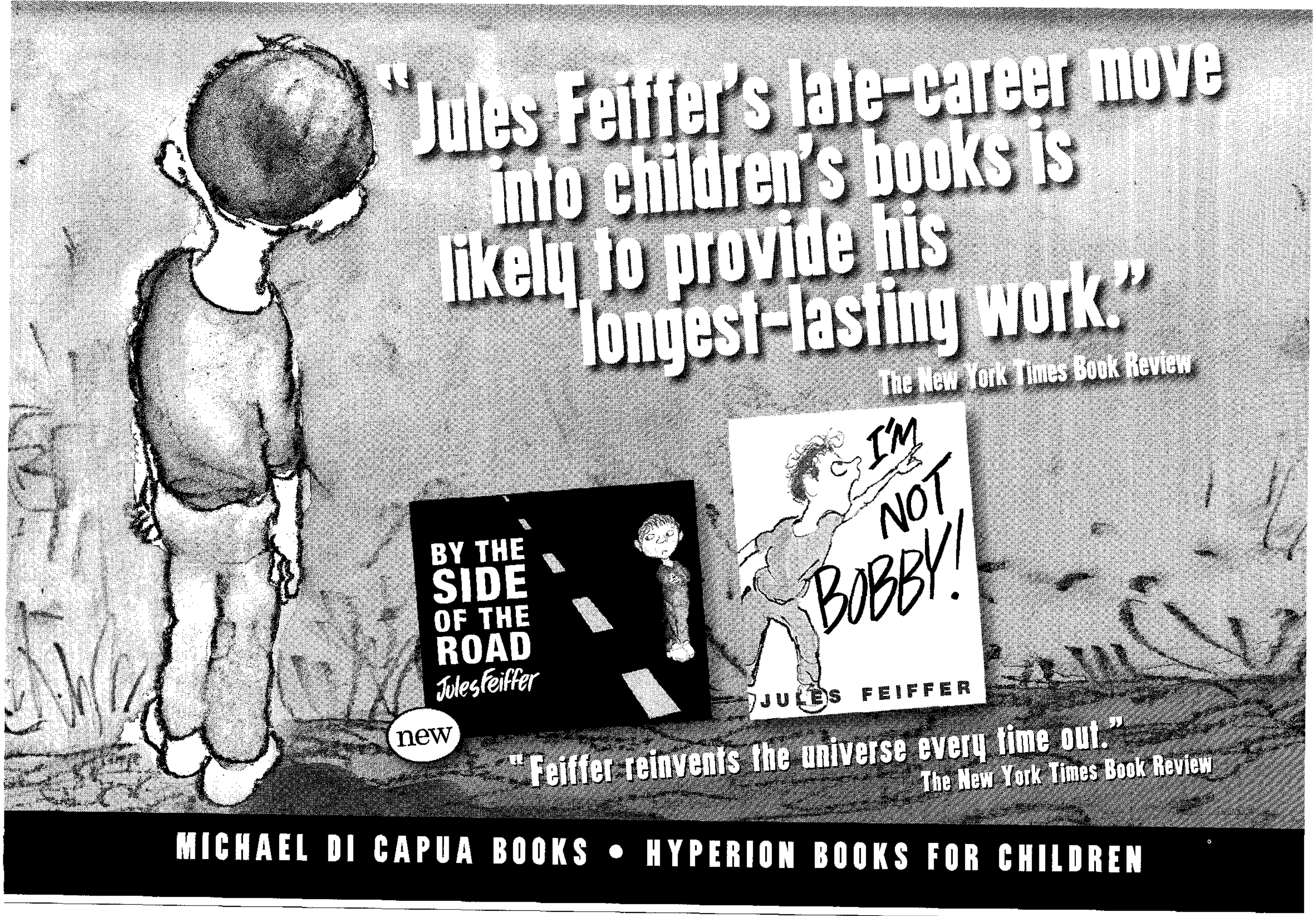
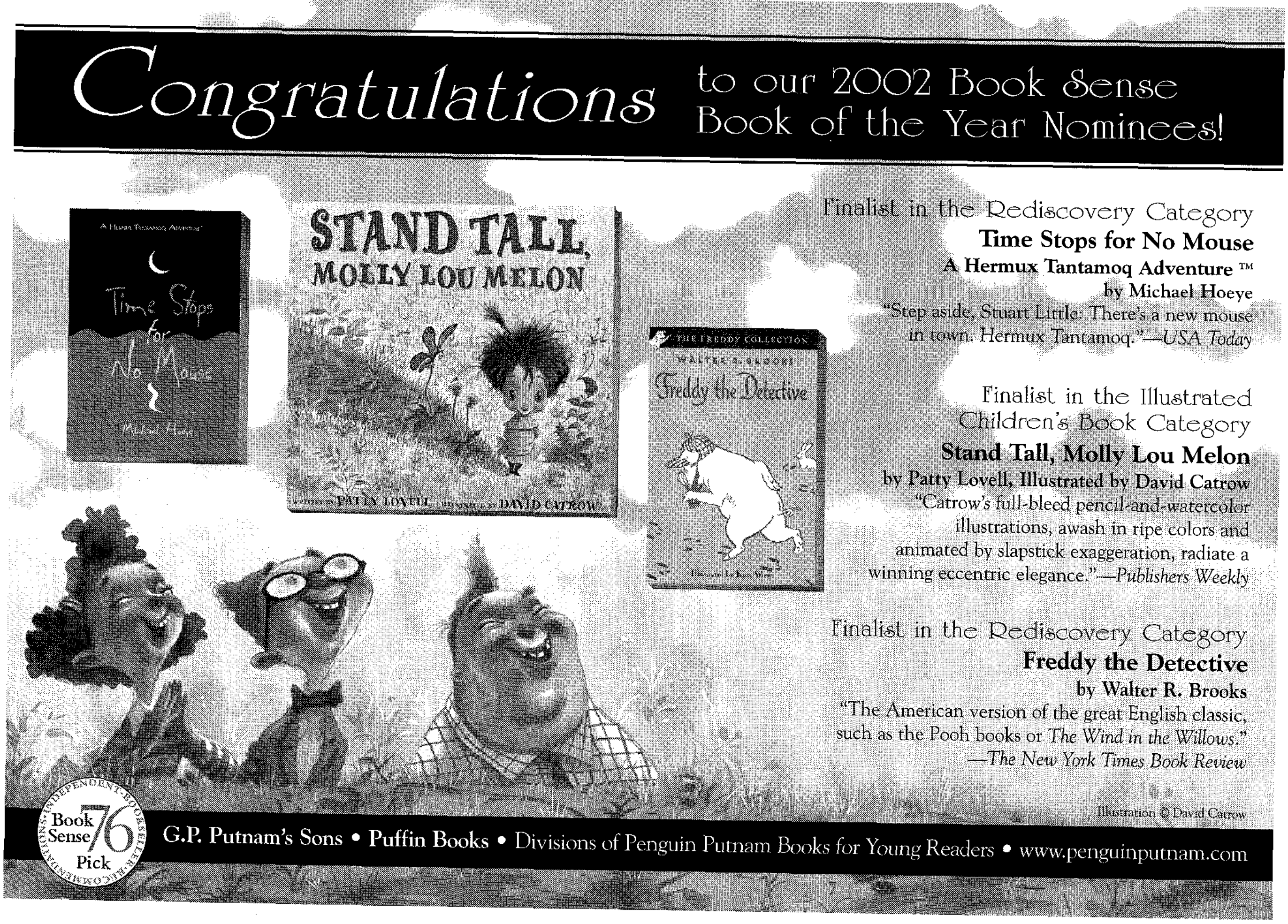

BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD
Jules Feiffer
new
I'M NOT BOBBY!
JULES FEIFFER

"Jules Feiffer's late-career move into children's books is likely to provide his longest-lasting work."
The New York Times Book Review

"Feiffer reinvents the universe every time out."
The New York Times Book Review

MICHAEL DI CAPUA BOOKS • HYPERION BOOKS FOR CHILDREN


A Hermux Tantamoq Adventure
Time Stops for No Mouse
Michael Hoeye
STAND TALL, MOLLY LOU MELON
PATTY LOVELL
DAVID CATROW
THE FREDDY COLLECTION
WALTER R. BROOKS
Freddy the Detective
Illustrated by Kurt Wiese
Book Sense 76 Pick
INDEPENDENT BOOKSELLER RECOMMENDATIONS

Congratulations to our 2002 Book Sense Book of the Year Nominees!

Finalist in the Rediscovery Category
Time Stops for No Mouse
A Hermux Tantamoq Adventure ™
by Michael Hoeye
"Step aside, Stuart Little: There's a new mouse in town. Hermux Tantamoq."—*USA Today*

Finalist in the Illustrated Children's Book Category
Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon
by Patty Lovell, Illustrated by David Catrow
"Catrow's full-bleed pencil-and-watercolor illustrations, awash in ripe colors and animated by slapstick exaggeration, radiate a winning eccentric elegance."—*Publishers Weekly*

Finalist in the Rediscovery Category
Freddy the Detective
by Walter R. Brooks
"The American version of the great English classic, such as the Pooh books or *The Wind in the Willows.*"
—*The New York Times Book Review*

Illustration © David Catrow

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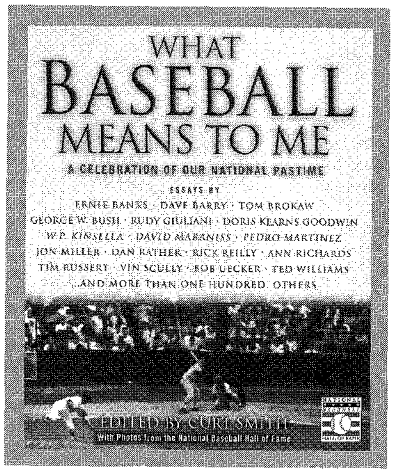
Made for Father's Day

A celebration of our national pastime


WHAT BASEBALL MEANS TO ME
A CELEBRATION OF OUR NATIONAL PASTIME
ESSAYS BY
ERNIE BANKS · DAVE BARRY · TOM BROKAW
GEORGE W. BUSH · RUDY GIULIANI · DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN
W.P. KINSELLA · DAVID MARANISS · PEDRO MARTINEZ
JON MILLER · DAN RATHER · RICK REILLY · ANN RICHARDS
TIM RUSSERT · VIN SCULLY · BOB UECKER · TED WILLIAMS
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EDITED BY CURT SMITH
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Essays from baseball's biggest fans from Tom Brokaw to Ted Williams and illustrated with more than 200 classic photos.

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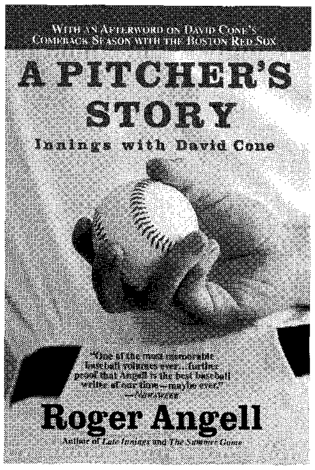
"Sheer redemptive magic."

–The New York Times Book Review


With an Afterword on David Cone's Comeback Season with the Boston Red Sox
A PITCHER'S STORY
Innings with David Cone
"One of the most memorable baseball volumes ever... further proof that Angell is the best baseball writer of our time—maybe ever." —Newsweek
Roger Angell
Author of Late Innings and The Summer Game

"No one writes more evocatively about the craft and magic of baseball than Roger Angell."

–The New York Times

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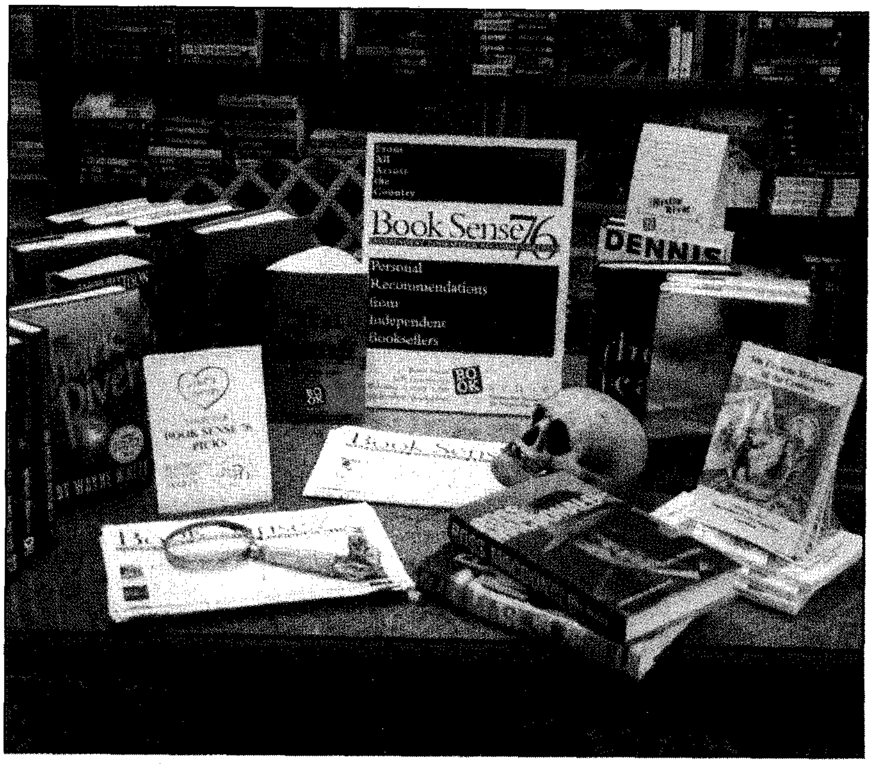
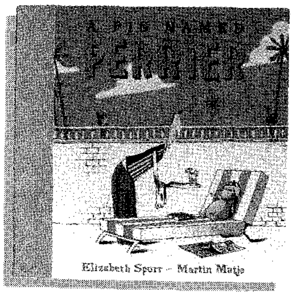
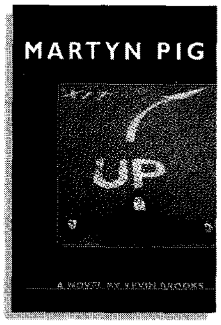

Book Sense 76
Personal Recommendations from Independent Booksellers
DENNIS

Whodunit enthusiasts travel miles to search for new and used mystery books at I Love a Mystery in Mission, Kansas.


A PIG NAMED PERRIER
Elizabeth Spurr · Martin Matje


MARTYN PIG
UP
A NOVEL BY KEVIN BROOKS

This Land Was Made for You and Me
The Life and Songs of Woody Guthrie
by Elizabeth Partridge

Publishers' Picks

Life with an alcoholic father was bad enough, but when he dies accidentally his son is afraid he will be blamed. Therefore, the title character in **Martyn Pig** by Kevin Brooks (The Chicken House/ Scholastic) tries to conceal his father's death with some surprisingly humorous results.

This Land Was Made for You and Me: The Life & Songs of Woody Guthrie by Elizabeth Partridge (Viking) gives young readers an introduction to Guthrie's remarkable life and the historical events that inspired his songs.

Lifestyles of the rich and porcine? The charming **A Pig Named Perrier** by Elizabeth Spurr, with illustrations by Martin Matje (Hyperion Books for Children), relates the Hollywood tale of a pampered, potbellied pig of privilege who seems to be missing something in life.

the reader guessing as to the true identity of the spy (or spies) until near the end of the book. An exciting read!"

When an urbane businessman discovers himself lost in the rainforests of Africa after a crash landing, he confronts his demons through the haze of fever-induced hallucinations. This is the mind-altering premise for "The Curve of the World," by Marcus Stevens (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill). "This is one of those books you can recommend to everyone," notes Jeanne Michael of **Odyssey Books** in Grass Valley, California. "There is plenty of suspenseful adventure, along with a sense of unease. Every turn of the page brings that 'Oh, no!' feeling, with a surprise at the end."

Kidding Around

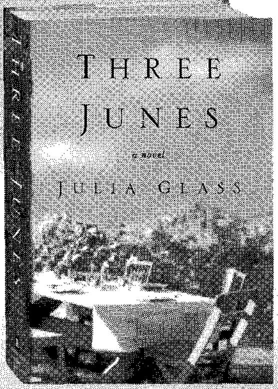
The approach of summer offers kids the promise of gentle afternoons spent enjoying a good read. You don't have to be ensconced in school to learn a thing or two.

In a mix that brings to mind sources as diverse as Kipling and Mary Poppins, "Journey to the River Sea" by Eva Ibbotson, with illustrations by Kevin Hawkes (Dutton Children's Books), weaves a tale of bratty twins, a priggish nanny, an aunt vainly struggling to recreate English life on the Amazon, and a boy hiding in the jungle. Dara La Porte of **Politics and Prose** in Washington, D.C. loves both the story and the charming, old-fashioned drawings. "It's a great yarn to read aloud or to curl up with on a cold Sunday," she says with satisfaction.

Some young adult books are so insightful that they should be read by parents too. Jerry Spinelli's "Loser" (Joanna Cotler Books) is just such a book. Notes Tom Montan of **Copperfield's Books** in Sebastopol, California, "This book cuts to the core of what it is like to be an inquisitive, thoughtful, and sensitive young man in our sometimes cruel and confusing world."

To find your nearest independent bookseller with Book Sense or purchase a book or a national gift certificate, call 1-888-BOOKSENSE or visit www.BookSense.com.

Unique Stories from Pantheon



A Booksense 76 Pick

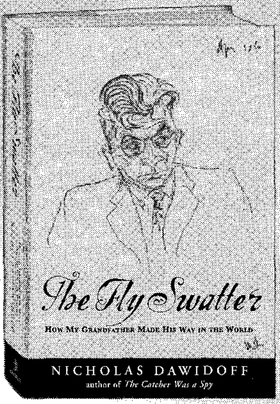
"Julia Glass's talent just sends chills up my spine; her novel, THREE JUNES, is a marvel."

—Richard Russo, author of *Empire Falls*

From the author of *The Catcher Was a Spy*

"To give birth to one's own grandfather is no mean feat but that is exactly Nicholas Dawidoff's great triumph. THE FLY SWATTER is a densely imagined, beautifully written book."

—Peter Carey, author of *True History of the Kelly Gang*


The Fly Swatter
How My Grandfather Made His Way in the World
NICHOLAS DAWIDOFF
author of The Catcher Was a Spy

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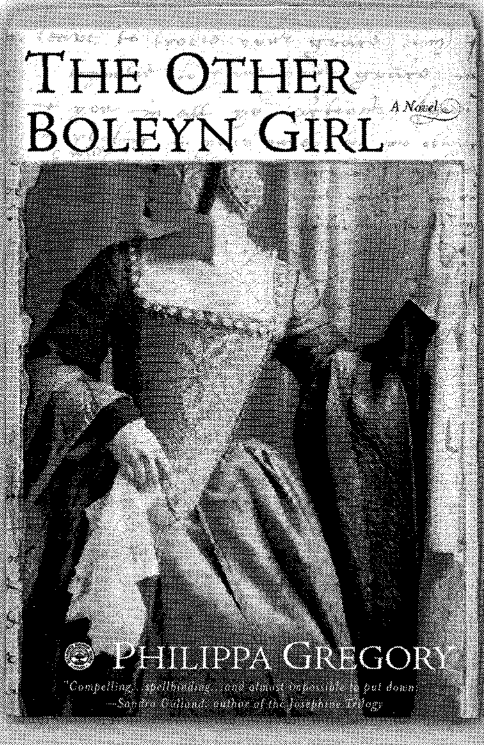
Two sisters. One king. And a rivalry that would command a kingdom.

"Spellbinding.... A compelling tale of intrigue and romance set against a rich tapestry of the court of Henry VIII.... Almost impossible to put down."

—**Sandra Gulland**, author of the *Josephine* trilogy.

"Flawlessly done!"

—**Pamela Rafael Berkman**, author of *Her Infinite Variety*


THE OTHER BOLEYN GIRL
A Novel
PHILIPPA GREGORY
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—Sandra Gulland, author of the Josephine Trilogy

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Book Sense 76

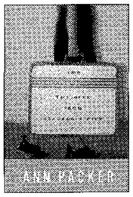
INDEPENDENT BOOKSELLER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Top Ten recommendations from the May/June Book Sense 76, as voted by independent booksellers.

EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED
JONATHAN SAFRAN FOER

1. EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED: A Novel

by Jonathan Safran Foer (Houghton Mifflin, $24) "More than one English language is at work in Foer's absolutely captivating book. This book's riches (and they are many) lie in its astonishing range of humor and horror, an awareness of past and present, and a presence that takes very certain words to say. Say them Foer does: daringly, hauntingly, and deeply. This is one of the most fabulous books I've read in a long, long time."—RICK SIMONSON, ELLIOTT BAY BOOK CO., SEATTLE, WA

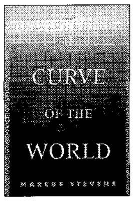


2. THE DIVE FROM CLAUSEN'S PIER

by Ann Packer (Knopf, $24) "This first novel is the beautifully told story of Carrie Bell. When her boyfriend breaks his neck and is paralyzed, she must decide what it is she owes to those she loves. The writing is wonderfully unsentimental, and the people are at once distinctive and familiar. Carrie's choices and their consequences are surprising—yet believable. And the conclusion is filled with unexpected satisfaction and pleasure."—LESLIE REINER, INKWOOD BOOKS, TAMPA, FL · Also a Random House Audio

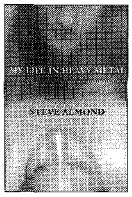
3. HAMLET'S DRESSER: A Memoir

by Bob Smith (Scribner, $24) "Witnessing the joy Shakespeare has brought to Smith's life and the ability of Shakespeare's language to resurrect memories for his elderly students will inspire readers. After reading this delicious memoir, I want to sit with Smith and hear more and more about him and his ability to hold our hand and walk us through the wisdom of Shakespeare's language and characters."—ROXANNE COADY, R.J. JULIA BOOKSELLERS, MADISON, CT



4. THE CURVE OF THE WORLD

by Marcus Stevens (Algonquin, $24.95) "A businessman who has crash landed in the rainforests of Africa confronts his own demons as his wife and son search for him. There is plenty of suspenseful adventure, along with a sense of unease. Every turn of the page brings that 'oh, no' feeling, leading up to a surprise ending. This is a novel I can recommend to a lot of readers."—JEANNE MICHAEL, ODYSSEY BOOKS, GRASS VALLEY, CA Also a Penguin Audio



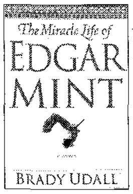
5. MY LIFE IN HEAVY METAL

by Steve Almond (Grove, $23) "These stories are filled with some of the most vigorous and energetic writing that I have read in a long while! Some of them will make you feel young, some will make you feel old, and some of them might make you blush just a little ... but that's a good thing. A must read for any fan of the short story."—JEN REYNOLDS, JOSEPH-BETH BOOKSELLERS, CINCINNATI, OH

A Week in Winter
MARCIA WILLETT

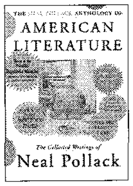
6. A WEEK IN WINTER

by Marcia Willett (Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's, $24.95) "A lovely story to linger over, with a beautiful, intriguing setting in Cornwall and characters you'll hold dear. If you've been waiting for another book like THE SHELL SEEKERS, well ... here it is! And it's wonderful."—SUSAN WASSON, BOOKWORKS, ALBUQUERQUE, NM



7. THE MIRACLE LIFE OF EDGAR MINT

by Brady Udall (Vintage, $14 paper, in stores May 21) "This is a masterpiece. Udall has created one of the finest people of all time. Edgar breaks your heart, puts it back together, and never lets go. Be prepared to unplug the phone and ignore your family. This is the best $14 you'll spend this summer."—CHRIS BOWE, LONGFELLOW BOOKS, PORTLAND, ME



8. THE NEAL POLLACK ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

by Neal Pollack (Perennial, $13.95 paper) "This mock-autobiography satirically reveals the American author as macho superhero and media star. Throw off everyday propriety and enjoy Neal's theatrical exposé of personality and media-hung values!"—NANCY WIRTH, KEPLER'S, PALO ALTO, CA Also a HarperAudio CD

SEABISCUIT

9. SEABISCUIT

by Laura Hillenbrand (Ballantine, $15 paper) "Hillenbrand gifts us with an incredible history of a time, a place, and an entire culture. Like other great books about a storm, a ship, an adventure, the legendary racehorse is a wonderful inspiration for Hillenbrand's larger story... though even if it were just the horse, it would be enough. A great adventure told by a writer worthy of the task."—LAURA SNYDER, LUCY'S BOOKS, ASTORIA, OR

SPIES
MICHAEL FRAYN

10. SPIES: A Novel

by Michael Frayn (Metropolitan/Holt, $23) "On the surface, this is the story of two boys spending a summer at play in England at the beginning of World War II. But, as the novel progresses, layers of this idyllic scene peel away to reveal a darker business. It's like Forster's A PASSAGE TO INDIA meets Lynch's BLUE VELVET: engrossing, compelling, shocking. One of the best novels to come out of England in a long time."—MICHAEL BOGGS, CARMICHAEL'S, LOUSVILLE, KY

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MOVIES OPENING

ABC AFRICA
Abbas Kiarostami's documentary about the children's hospitals and orphanages of AIDS-stricken, war-ravaged Uganda, which he shot with a digital camera during a ten-day visit to the country. In English and Farsi. Opening May 3. (Cinema Village.)

BARAN
Majid Majidi ("The Children of Heaven") directed this story of an Afghan refugee girl who passes for a boy at a Tehran construction site. In Farsi. Opening May 3. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

DEUCES WILD
Brooklyn street gangs duke it out during the summer of 1958 in a drama directed by Scott Kalvert. With Stephen Dorff, Brad Renfro, Fairuza Balk, and Balthazar Getty. Opening May 3.

FLEEING BY NIGHT
Set in China in the nineteen-thirties, this film tells of a love triangle between an American-trained cellist, his fiancée, and the opera star they both become enamored of. Directed by Chi Yin. In Mandarin. Opening May 3. (Quad Cinema.)

A GRIN WITHOUT A CAT
Chris Marker directed this three-hour documentary about the successes and failures of the political left during the nineteen-sixties and seventies. Originally produced in 1977, the film was updated in 1993, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In English, Spanish, and French. Opening May 1. (Film Forum.)

HOLLYWOOD ENDING
A comedy written and directed by Woody Allen, in which he plays a washed-up director who is given one last chance to make a hit film. The cast includes Téa Leoni, Treat Williams, and Debra Messing. Opening May 3.

THE MYSTIC MASSEUR
An adaptation of V. S. Naipaul's novel, set in Trinidad's Indian community, about an aspiring author (Aasif Mandvi) who develops the power to heal people. Directed by Ismail Merchant. Opening May 3. (Angelika Film Center and Cinema 1.)

SPIDER-MAN
The director Sam Raimi brings Stan Lee's classic comic to the screen with Tobey Maguire as Peter Parker, Kirsten Dunst as Mary Jane, and Willem Dafoe as the Green Goblin. Opening May 3.

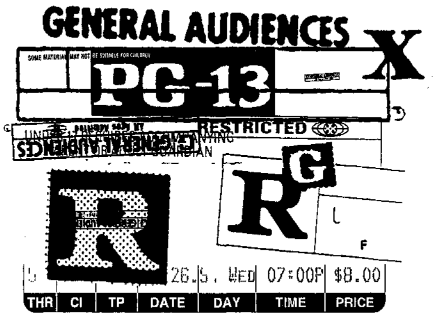
UZUMAKI
A Japanese horror film about a town where everyone develops an obsession with spiral-shaped objects. Opening May 1. (Pioneer.)

WARM WATER UNDER A RED BRIDGE
Shohei Imamura's latest film is the story of a recently fired executive (Koji Yakusho) who decides to search for a golden statue buried in a remote village, where he meets a woman with magical sexual powers. In Japanese. Opening May 3. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

FILM NOTES

CHANGING LANES
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

CHELSEA WALLS
Ethan Hawke, as director, presents a group of friends and fellow-actors in a series of mushy dramatic moments inside the venerable Chelsea Hotel, the one-time haunt of William Burroughs, Sid Vicious, and other artists. Hawke captures the woozy, dissolute atmosphere of the place (the rough, grungy surroundings are well suited to the shadowy digital filmmaking used here), and there's some beautiful use of Jeff Tweedy's music, but the movie sinks with its script. The writer Nicole Burdette based it on her stage play, and all the woe-is-me bohemian angst grates on the viewer eventually.—*Bruce Diones* (Chelsea Cinemas and Village Theatre VII.)



LES DESTINÉES
The air is soft, and everyone speaks in clipped tones in this sumptuous yet relaxed French epic that begins in 1900 and traces the interlocked affairs of two large haut-bourgeois Protestant families, one of which controls a cognac company in the Charente section of France, and the other a porcelain factory in Limoges. The hero, Jean Barnery (Charles Berling), an intense, fine-grained young man, who is a minister in the fictional town of Barbizac, dismisses the wife he doesn't love (Isabelle Huppert) and drops out of the ministry in shame, only to fall in love with the ravishing young Pauline (Emmanuelle Béart). Unlike such comparable family epics as Visconti's "The Leopard" and Bertolucci's "1900," the movie is unemphatic and largely fleeting—the most substantial moments pass in a semi-whisper. The visual scheme appears to be derived from Bonnard and Vuillard. Directed by Olivier Assayas and based on a novel by Jacques Chardonne. In French.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 4/15/02.) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

DOGTOWN AND Z-BOYS
An exuberant documentary account of the rebirth of skateboarding in the early seventies. It seems that a fortuitous combination of newly invented polyurethane wheels and a drought in Southern California—all those drained swimming pools with their curved bottoms and vertical sides—led a bunch of surfer rats in Santa Monica to adapt their crouching, wave-touching moves to the skateboard. As a culture, skateboarding took off from there, and almost thirty years later, the little group of punky pioneers is still proud of what they did. Skate legend Stacy Peralta directed, and the documentary has lots of home movies, stills, and current interviews with the grownup Z-boys, including such former teen masters as Jay Adams and Tony Alva. The movie is too long for what it has to say, but it has a likably rough surface and an appreciation of odd talents and quirks. Sean Penn is the narrator.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, Empire 25, and 19th Street East 6.)

ENIGMA
The title refers to the infamous encryption machine employed by the Germans in the Second World War, although viewers may be excused for noting a deeper mystery: how could anyone make such a prosaic film out of such promising material? We get a young Cambridge mathematician (Dougray Scott), who is called to Bletchley Park—the secret center of British brainwork in the fight against Enigma—to crack a new code named Shark. There, hindered by one clerk (Saffron Burrows) and helped by another (Kate Winslet), he is dragged into a saga of spying, treachery, and terrible wartime food. The task of deciphering, though laid out with a care verging on the simplistic, manages nevertheless to remain unintelligible, as does the means by which the action suddenly switches to Scotland. With Jeremy Northam as a smooth spook and, for one delirious moment, Mick Jagger.—*Anthony Lane* (4/22 & 29/02) (Angelika Film Center, Cinema 1, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and 19th Street East 6.)

FRAILTY
The actor Bill Paxton makes a creepy, atmospheric directing début in this gothic tale about a widower (played by Paxton) who believes that God has told him to kill the demons in others, and who brings his two children along to witness the carnage. The violence in the movie is suggestive—there are no body parts thrown at the screen—and Paxton's directing style is clever enough at times to recall Charles Laughton's masterful noir, "The Night of the Hunter." Though the story is told through a clunky and complicated series of flashbacks, it's a truly demented and effective chiller.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

KISSING JESSICA STEIN
The title character is a nice Jewish girl from Scarsdale who is not gay, but wants to know how to be. After a series of dates with feckless men, she answers a personal ad placed by a woman seeking a woman. So far, so straight. The twist is that the woman who wrote the ad is, like Jessica, débuting as a lesbian, and together the two begin a jittery emotional experiment. Heather Juergensen and Jennifer Westfeldt play the leads, and they also wrote the script, which is very chatty and fast. Their courtship scenes convince where it matters most: showing how the skittish and prim Stein might loosen up and respond to another woman, a self-imposed dare that becomes a reality. The conclusion is a confused mess, but in a way that's fine: it leaves the movie open-ended, giving it an afterlife as a conversation piece.—*Michael Agger* (Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE LAST WALTZ
Arguably, the best of all rock-concert documentaries. Martin Scorsese's film of the Band's Thanksgiving, 1976, performance in San Francisco is even-tempered and intensely satisfying. Visually, it's dark-toned and rich and classically simple. It's a relief to see a concert film without whizzing-around, catch-as-catch-can cinematography; Scorsese planned the camera cues like a general deploying his troops, and Michael Chapman, Vilmos Zsigmond, Laszlo Kovacs, and David Myers are a few of those responsible for the serene imagery and its inner excitement. With Band members—Robbie Robertson, Levon Helm, Garth Hudson, Richard Manuel, and Rick Danko. Also with performers who represent the different styles of rock and the traditions that have fuelled it—Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, Van Morrison, Eric Clapton, Muddy Waters, Neil Young, Ronnie Hawkins, Dr. John, the Staples, Ringo Starr, Paul Butterfield, Emmylou Harris, Neil Diamond, and others.—*Pauline Kael* (Union Square.)

LIFE OR SOMETHING LIKE IT
Not much like it, actually. Angelina Jolie, her hair in a dreadful blond bouffant, is the smart but shallow Lanie Kerigan, a Seattle local-news TV reporter who wants to go network. Her life begins to fall apart when a street bum who makes prophecies (Tony Shalhoub) says she will die in a week. She is forced to encounter what's authentic in this world, which turns out to be Edward Burns, unshaven, as a cameraman with a devil-may-care attitude. Will she be saved from the unspeakable crime of careerism and learn to enjoy life? Written by John Scott Shepherd and directed by Stephen Herek.—*D.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

MONSOON WEDDING
Mira Nair's new picture has been hailed as a feel-good spree, but it's better than that—a barely stable compound of the wounding, the confusing, and the appealing. The action takes place in Delhi, where a pair of middle-class parents (Lillete Dubey and Naseeruddin Shah) work themselves into a froth over the nuptials of their daughter (Vasundhara Das). Her marriage is, of course, arranged; for all the racket and buzz of the film's modernity, it finds time to make the suggestion—bewildering, perhaps, to audiences here—that from this archaic arrangement can spring an enduring love. The groom is flying in from Houston, Texas; another relative travels from Australia, and you brace yourself for the cultural collisions. The result is a comedy, but only just. India's stressful poise between orthodoxy and innovation (listen

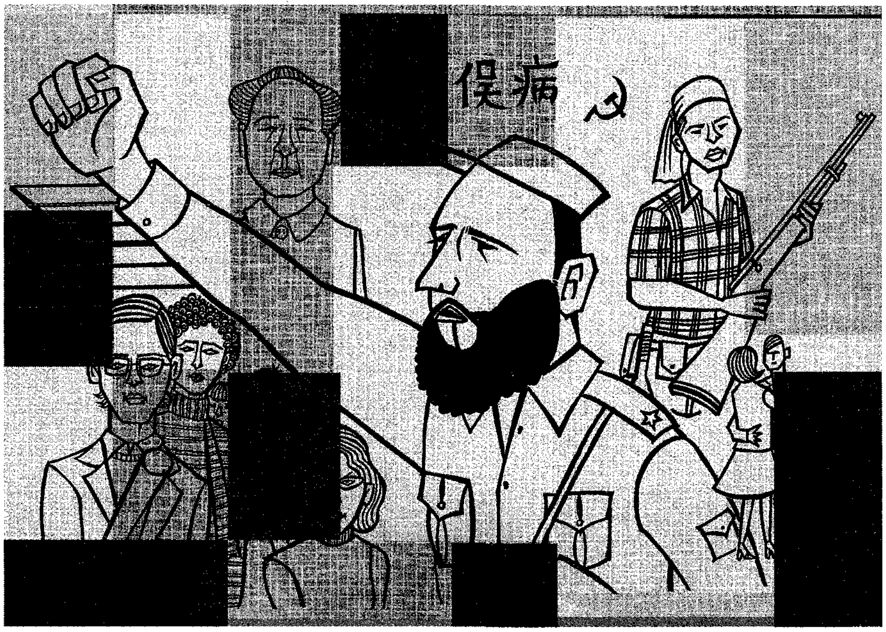
for the clash of peacock and cell phone) leads to a devastating family fracture that is only half-healed by the celebrations at the end. In English and Hindi.—*A.L.* (2/18 & 25/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Paris, Sunshine Cinema, and 34th Street Theatre.)

MURDER BY NUMBERS

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Chelsea West, Cinema 2, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

NINE QUEENS

The great Argentinean actor Ricardo Darín (currently he can also be seen in "Son of the Bride") plays an experienced grifter who takes a young hopeful (Gastón Pauls) into his confidence game. The seductive and manipulative camerawork and the sly-as-a-fox performance by Darín combine to make a slippery caper movie. There are elements of Mamet and Hitchcock throughout, but the director, Fabián Bielinsky, uses these influences amusingly and crafts an unpredictable entertainment. In Spanish.—*B.D.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)



Opening May Day, "A Grin Without a Cat," directed by Chris Marker.

HIROSHI TANABE

PANIC ROOM

The title of the new David Fincher film refers to a secure stronghold that is built into the walls of a New York house. Think of it as a safe, in which you lock your loved ones as well as your money. It is in one such room that a divorced mother (Jodie Foster) and her daughter (Kristen Stewart) take refuge when three burglars (Forest Whitaker, Dwight Yoakam, and Jared Leto) break in at night. From here on it's a game of cat and mouse, with the cat swinging a sledgehammer and the mice trying to reach their cell phone. The result is not so much scary as endlessly worrying; the movie was designed, propitiously, to suck in all the insecurities that you can imagine, and a few that you can't. What lends the ordeal its bite is the playoff between Whitaker, with his sluggish menace, and the tight-lipped, fretting Foster.—*A.L.* (4/8/02) (Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE PIANO TEACHER

Michael Haneke's calmly lucid masterpiece is about a seemingly unmanageable subject: a sadomasochistic piano teacher, Professor Erika Kohut (Isabelle Huppert), who maintains a sternly proper façade at the Vienna Conservatory while tormenting and playing dirty tricks on her talented students. Erika lives in an apartment with her hysterically possessive mother (Annie Girardot)—the two take turns slapping each other—and she tries to control the insolently charming and handsome young piano student (Benoît Magimel) who wants to be her lover. She may be a certifiable nut straight out of clinical literature, but she's also a remarkable dramatic creation—an appalling but plausible human being brought to life by one of the world's bravest actresses. Huppert, whose masklike face seethes with rage, gives a classic account of repression and sexual hypocrisy. This is a genuinely shocking movie (one scene of self-mutilation is hard to take), but it's supremely intelligent, too, and there isn't a trace of sensationalism. Music by Bach, Schubert, and Brahms is central to the narrative. In French.—*D.D.* (4/1/02) (Cinema Village and Sutton 1 and 2.)

THE SALTON SEA

A noirish, down-and-out Los Angeles apartment; tattooed meth-heads freaking at endless parties; a lonely trumpet player sitting in a building on fire—the young director D. J. Caruso is a romantic rhapsodist of squalor and disaster. His material is morose, self-pitying, and pretentious, but the picture is absorbing nonetheless and generally well-acted. Val Kilmer gives a grimly witty performance as the seemingly defeated hero, a man who has suffered loss and is seeking revenge. Vincent D'Onofrio goes over the top as a sadistic drug dealer who has snorted away his nose (he's got a plastic one), and virtually every hip actor remaining in Hollywood can be found burrowing in one dark corner or another. Screenplay by Tony Gayton. See it very late at night.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

THE SCORPION KING

This film was put into production just seconds after "The Mummy Returns" wrapped, and it shows. The script and the costumes are threadbare, the special effects sloppy, and the sets look like they escaped from a high-school science fair. In what is ostensibly a prequel to the "Mummy" movies, every effect and set piece of those films gets recycled with such dismal results that it all looks like a series of outtakes. The director, Chuck Russell, bets the bank on the appeal of his star, the W.W.F. wrestler the Rock. As an action hero he's not the swiftest—he seems to be fighting gravity with every step—but he has a sense of humor that shows up onscreen, a good thing when you're sword-and-sandal deep in epic trouble.—*B.D.* (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

TIME OUT

A quietly brilliant movie. Vincent (Aurélien Recoing), a fortyish French business consultant, gets canned from his job but doesn't tell his family. Instead he spends his time driving around the countryside and showering his friends with business-school jargon. They take him for a U.N. official running private investments on the side, and he easily fleeces them. But there's no particular point to Vincent's swindles: he's a fantasist, a put-on artist who wants the freedom not to work, and he's unwilling to disappoint anybody. Laurent Cantet's movie starts as an anecdote about unemployment and turns into a meditation on modern work. What, after all, does it mean to labor in a global economy in which businessmen seem to be constantly moving abstractions around on an endless flowchart of possibilities? The joke in this gravely lyrical movie is that no one can tell the difference between Vincent's invented nonsense and the real nonsense. In French.—*D.D.* (4/15/02) (Eastside Playhouse and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

TWENTIETH CENTURY

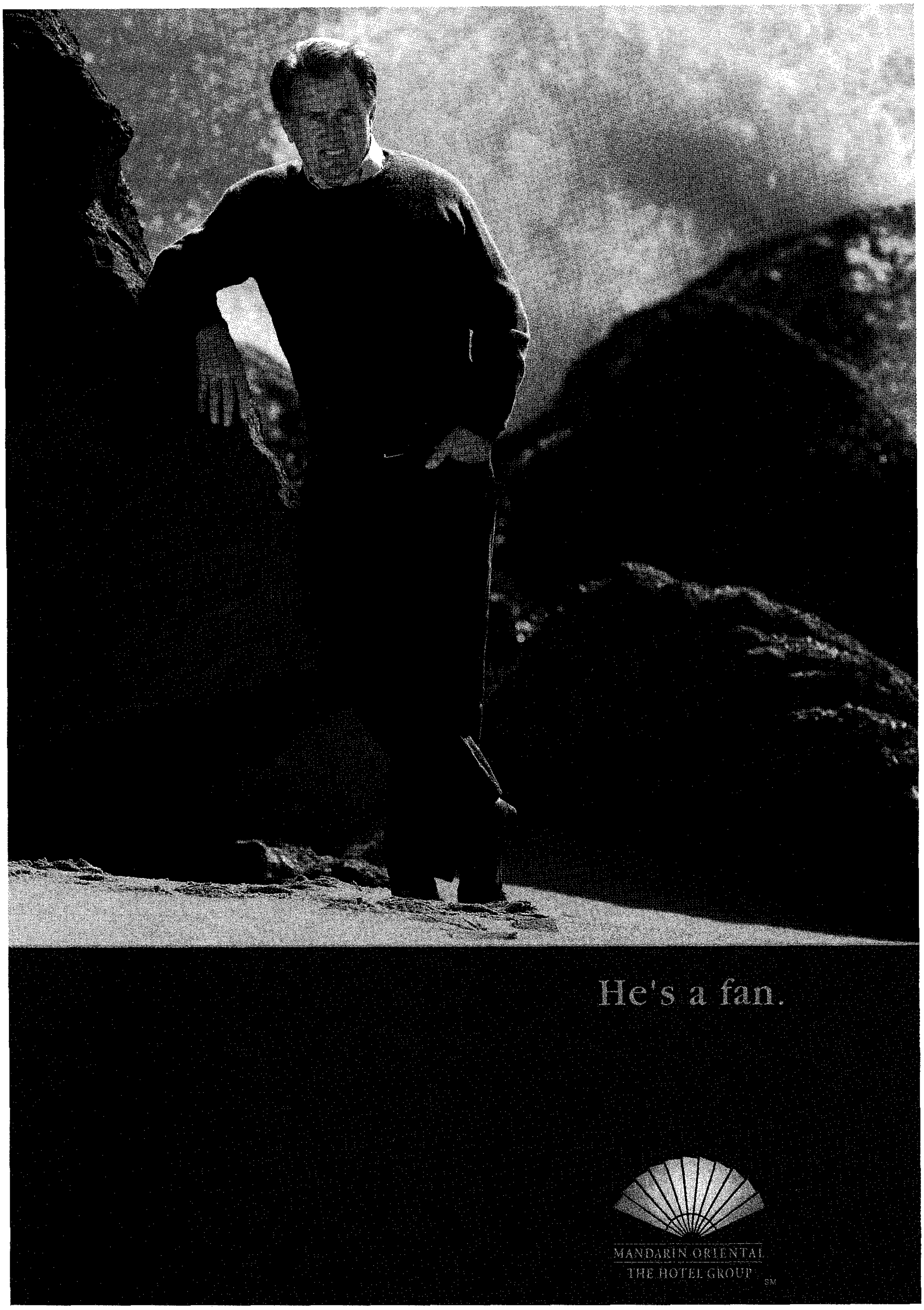
A first-rate hardboiled farce about theatrical personalities. John Barrymore was a great farceur, and his performance as the egomaniac producer Oscar Jaffe is a roaring caricature of theatrical drive and temperament. It was Carole Lombard's performance as Jaffe's protegée, Lily Garland (née Mildred Plotka), who has become a movie star, that established her as a comedienne. Lombard's talents in this 1934 film are not of the highest, but her spirits are, and in her skintight satins she incarnates the giddy glamour of thirties comedy. Most of the action takes place on the crack train of the title—the Twentieth Century, going from Chicago to New York—which represented the latest thing in speed and luxury. The script is freely, carelessly irreverent, with affectionate, corny ethnic humor and wisecracks about religion. Howard Hawks directed in a fast, entertaining style—punching up the lines; it's the style he later perfected in "His Girl Friday."—*P.K.* (Film Forum; May 1.)

WORLD TRAVELER

A young architect named Cal (Billy Crudup) has so much going for him—beautiful wife, adoring child, good job, quiet New York apartment—that he has no option but to throw it all away and take off on his own. This brand of willful, inarticulate dread is by no means particular to the movies, yet Cal certainly takes his cue from congenital drifters like Jack Nicholson's character in "Five Easy Pieces." What's new is the way in which the director, Bart Freundlich, indulges the urgings of his hero: as Cal screws his way across America, meeting a cast of ex-friends, ex-drunks, and drunks, his stirrings are rarely viewed as anything less than noble. The result is both gloomy and graceful, and it settles, rather than rises, to its pastoral resolution, in which one generation of American manhood makes its peace with another. (You want to shout: That's it?) Julianne Moore, who lives with Freundlich off-screen, appears late in the movie as a paranoid alcoholic wearing too much makeup; we know that directors shouldn't favor their loved ones, but isn't this pushing it a bit? With a loud, funny cameo from James LeGros.—*A.L.* (4/22 & 29/02) (Union Square.)

Y TU MAMÁ TAMBIÉN

A new movie from the Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón, who came to Hollywood to make "A Little Princess" and "Great Expectations" and who has now returned in triumph to his homeland. The story is a stripped-down road movie: two teen-age friends, one rich (Diego Luna) and one poor (Gael García Bernal), borrow a car and set off to find the perfect beach, in the company of a Spanish woman (Maribel Verdú) who is not merely older, but married. Plus, she seems inexplicably happy to take either, or both, of them to bed. All the boys' dreams, in other words, have come true, and they can hardly handle it. What ensues is a sad and sexy picaresque, as everyone's illusions are peeled off along with their clothes. Cuarón's style is so open and relaxed, and his actors are so attuned to one another, that not until the final scene, with its litany of revelations, do we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see that what felt life-affirming has also been a meditation on the slide of time, and on the offstage presence of death. Unrated, and therefore full of proper sex, with all the improprieties intact. In Spanish.—*A.L.* (3/18/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE CAT'S MEOW
Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and
Village East Cinemas.
HOME MOVIE
Union Square.
MURDEROUS MAIDS
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.
MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING
Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas,
Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, and
Park & 86th Street Cinemas.
SADE
Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
THE SWEETEST THING
Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas,
42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre,
Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and
Village Theatre VII.
SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS
Film Forum.
TRIUMPH OF LOVE
Cinema 3rd Avenue and Village East Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through May 5: "Hardboiled Hollywood." May 4 at 2: "Devil in a Blue Dress" (1995, Carl Franklin). ♦ May 4 at 4: "Tough Guys Don't Dance" (1987, Norman Mailer). ♦ May 5 at 1:30: "Jackie Brown" (1997, Quentin Tarantino). ♦ May 5 at 4:15: "Out of Sight" (1998, Steven Soderbergh). ♦ Repertory nights. May 4-5 at 6:30: "Amarcord" (1974, Federico Fellini; in Italian).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—May 3-7: "La Captive" (2000, Chantal Akerman; in French). ♦ May 3-5: "Miotte Vu par Ruiz" (2001, Raoul Ruiz; in French).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—May 1 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Beautiful Girls" (1996, Ted Demme). The 6:50 screening will be introduced by Jonathan Demme. ♦ May 2 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Everybody Go Home" (1960, Luigi Comencini; in Italian). ♦ May 3 at 2, 5, and 8: "Ragtime" (1960, Milos Forman). ♦ May 4 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Where Is Freedom?" (1952, Roberto Rossellini; in Italian). ♦ May 5 at 2, 4:20, 6:40, and 9:30: "Blue Velvet" (1986, David Lynch). ♦ May 7 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:20: "La Strada" (1954, Federico Fellini; in Italian).

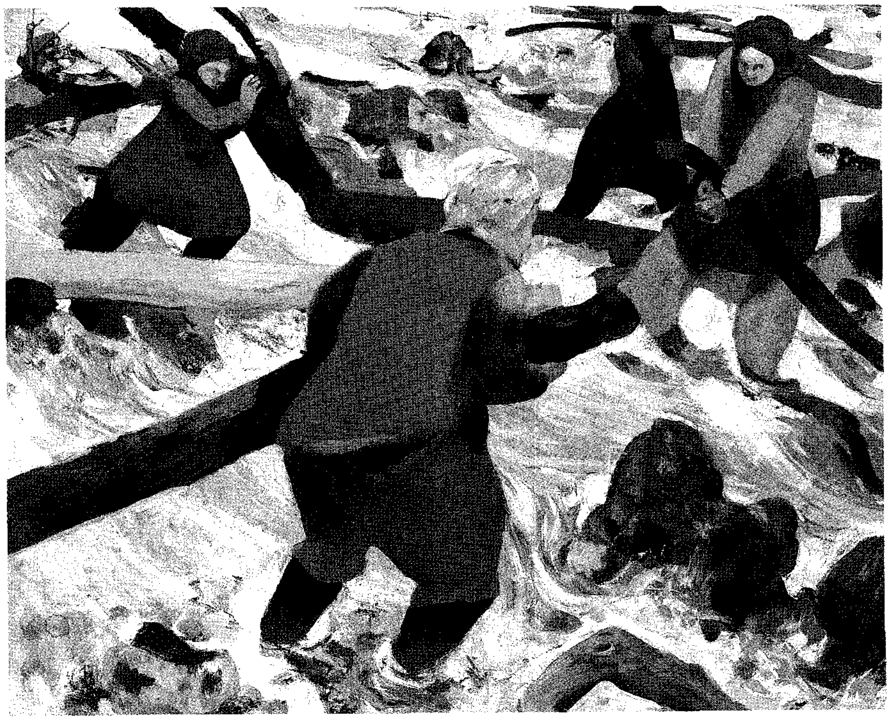
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through June 6: "The Great American Comedy." May 1 at 1, 4:35, and 8:10: "Nothing Sacred" (1937, William Wellman). ♦ May 1 at 2:50, 6:25, and 10: "Twentieth Century" (†). ♦ May 2 at 1:40, 5:35, and 9:30: "Road to Utopia" (1945, Hal Walker). ♦ May 2 at 3:45 and 7:40: "Hollywood or Bust" (1956, Frank Tashlin). ♦ May 3-4 at 1:25, 4:45, and 8:10: "Sleeper" (1973, Woody Allen). ♦ May 3-4 at 3:10, 6:30, and 9:50: "Bananas" (1971, Allen). ♦ May 5 at 1: "Hero for a Night" (1927, William James Craft). ♦ May 5 at 2:40, 6:20, and 10 and May 6 at 1:20 and 5: "Born Yesterday" (1950, George Cukor). ♦ May 5 at 4:35 and 8:15 and May 6 at 3:15: "It Should Happen to You" (1954, Cukor). ♦ May 6 at 7 and 8:40: "Girl Shy" (1924, Fred C. Newmeyer and Sam Taylor). ♦ May 7 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "The Whole Town's Talking" (1935, John Ford). ♦ May 7 at 2:50, 6:20, and 9:50: "A Slight Case of Murder" (1938, Lloyd Bacon).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Through May 21: The films of Jacques Rivette. May 7 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Duelle" (1976; in French without subtitles).

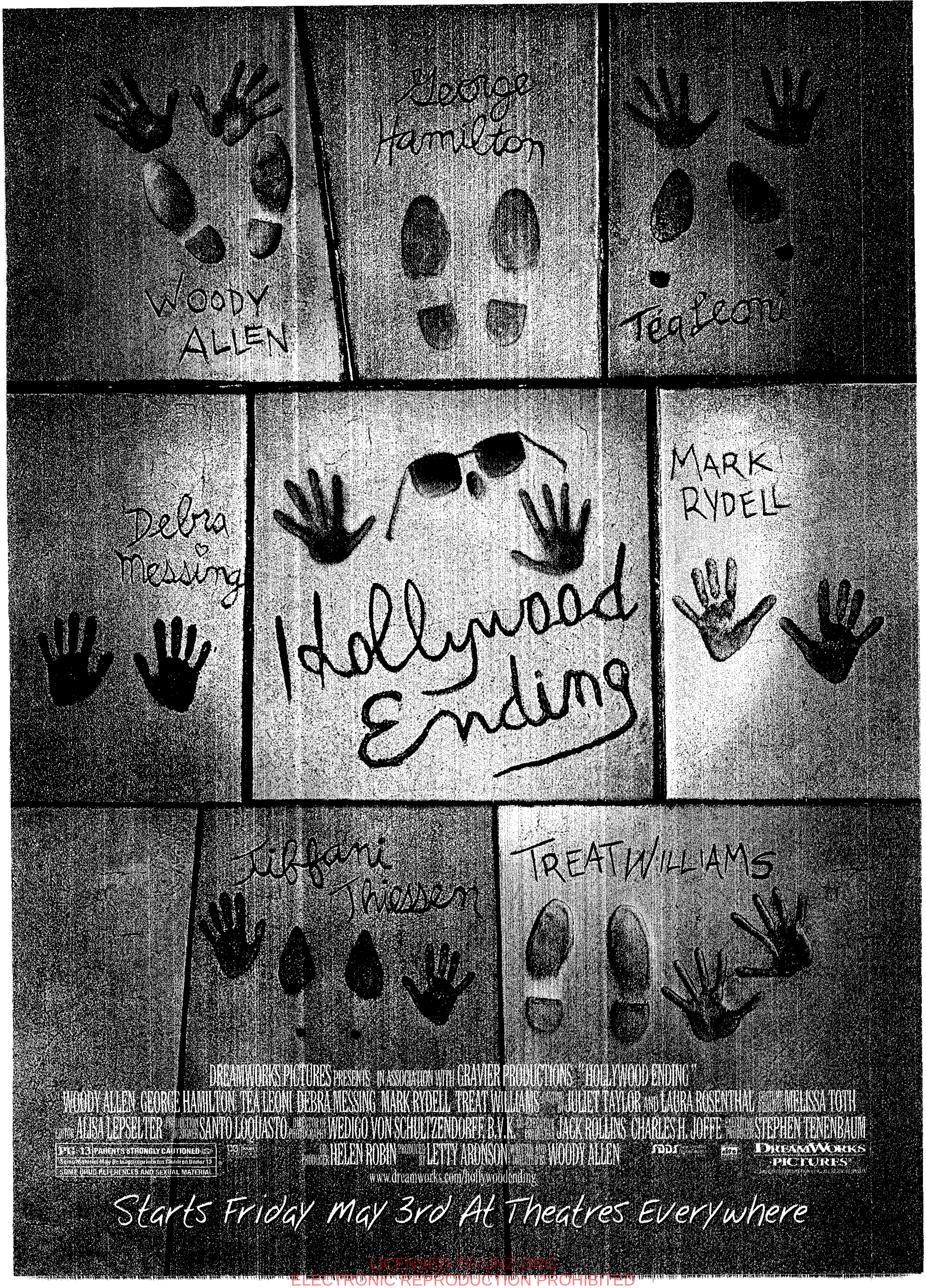
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through May 21: "Make Way for Tomorrow," a selection of films from the archive to mark the museum's temporary move to Queens. May 2 at 3 and May 7 at 6: "Make Way for Tomorrow" (1937, Leo McCarey). ♦ May 2 at 6 and May 3 at 3: "A Perfect World" (1993, Clint Eastwood). ♦ May 4 at 1: A selection of Georges Méliès films. ♦ May 4-7: "Morris Engel: The Independent." May 4 and May 6 at 3: "The 400 Blows" (1959, François Truffaut; in French). ♦ May 4 at 5 and May 5 at 1: "The Farm They Won" (1951, Engel) and "Little Fugitive" (1953, Ray Ashley, Engel, and Ruth Orkin). ♦ May 5 at 3: "One Chase Manhattan Plaza" (1961, Engel) and "Lovers and Lollipops" (1955, Engel and Orkin). ♦ May 5 at 5 and May 7 at 3: "The Dog Lover" (1962, Engel) and "Weddings and Babies" (1958, Engel).

SYMPHONY SPACE
2537 Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—Through July 21: Classic French cinema. May 4 at 1, 5:30, and 8:30 and May 5 at 1: "The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie" (1972, Luis Buñuel; in French and Spanish). ♦ May 4 at 3 and May 5 at 3, 5:30, and 8:30: "Belle de Jour" (1967, Buñuel; in French).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through May 5: "After the War, Before the Wall: German Cinema, 1945-60." All films are in German. May 1 at 1, 5:20, and 9:45: "A Call Girl Named Rosemarie" (1959, Rolf Thiele). ♦ May 1 at 3 and 7:20: "Sharks and Small Fish" (1957, Frank Wisbar). ♦ May 2 at 1, 5, and 9: "Aren't We Wonderful?" (1958, Kurt Hoffmann). ♦ May 2 at 3:10 and 7:10: "The Doctor from Stalingrad" (1958, Géza von Radványl). ♦ May 3 at 1, 5:15, and 9:15: "The 1000 Eyes of Dr. Mabuse" (1960, Fritz Lang). ♦ May 3 at 3:15 and 7:20: "The Death Ship" (1959, Georg Tressler). ♦ May 4 at 2 and 6:15: "The Bridge" (1959, Bernhard Wicki). ♦ May 4 at 4:10 and 8:30: "Kirmes" (1960, Wolfgang Staudte). ♦ May 5 at 1:30, 5:30, and 9:30: "My Schoolmate" (1960, Robert Siodmak). ♦ May 5 at 3:30 and 7:30: "The Avenger" (1960, Karl Anton).


RICCARDO VECCHIO

Majid Majidi's "Baran" dramatizes the life of Afghan refugees working in Iran.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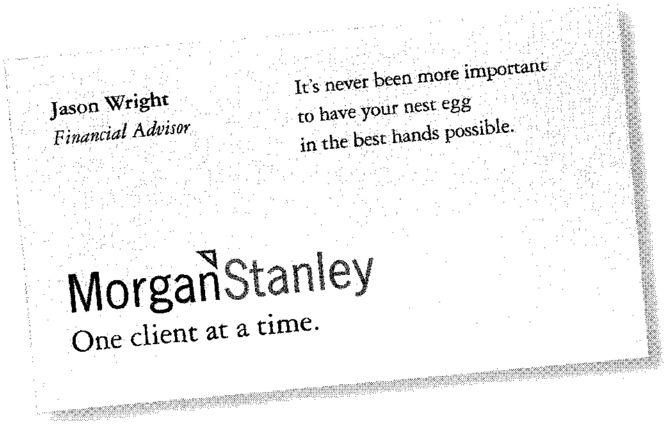

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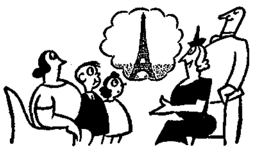
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

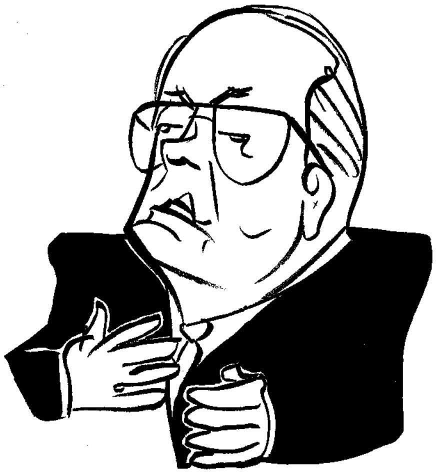
COMMENT

FRENCH FOLLIES



Last Monday, on the afternoon following the first round of the French Presidential election, the Paris daily *Le Monde* ran a cartoon of the National Front candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen piloting a small airplane toward two towers that were identified as the current President, Jacques Chirac, and the current Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin. That image may strike New Yorkers as excessive, but it shows how it must have felt if you were there. What has happened in France is both less significant and more frightening than a lot of people like to think. It is less significant because Le Pen's "victory," his finishing second, ahead of Jospin—with seventeen per cent of the vote, in a field of more than a dozen candidates—and taking his place, with Chirac, as one of the two candidates on the ballot in the second round, is largely a freak result of a Presidential voting system worse even than our own. If George Bush and Al Gore and Ralph Nader and Pat Buchanan and Ross Perot and Jesse Jackson and John McCain and Pat Robertson and your uncle Mo all ran on a single ballot on a single day, with the top two finishers advancing to a runoff, weird things would happen here, too. Weird things *do* happen here. Witness Perot in early '92 and Buchanan in early '96, when they were beneficiaries of the same factors that put Le Pen in second place last week: a mixture of what-the-hellism and genuine discontent. The constitution of the Fifth Republic was hand-tailored, in 1958, for one man, Charles de Gaulle, who wanted a Presidential election with a cutthroat charisma contest, in which the winner assumed absolute monarchical powers, and politics was dislodged from petty party loyalties. Ever since de Gaulle went away, French Presidents have been wearing the same constitutional suit, and ever more uneasily. Sooner or later, it was bound to fall around the ankles of the system.

Still, there is no far-right Vichyite renaissance in France, no Pieds Noirs uprising, nor, really, is there any anti-Semitic rampage. (Le Pen is spasmodically anti-Semitic but systematically anti-immigrant; i.e., anti-Arab.) The problem is not that the cancer has grown; Le Pen's vote is about the same size as it was last time, but a lower turnout made it bulk larger. The problem is that the disease has not receded. The situation is scarier than anyone wants to say, simply because if, by some hideous mischance, or some strange perversity of purpose—and perversities of purpose are not unknown in France—Le Pen were to be elected President in the second round of voting, next week, France would undergo a revolution of one kind or another, and the Fifth Republic would come to an end. Left and right alike, the technocratic and meritocratic élite that actually governs France (and whose existence is at once a key cause of the protest vote and an enduring source of the country's pride) would not permit a National Front government. What it would do is hard to say—France has a long history of constitutional coups, like the one that brought de Gaulle himself to power in 1958—but it's a safe bet that Jean-Marie Le Pen can never peacefully become President of the French Republic. At stake next week, then, is not the fate of this or that French politician; it is the stability of Europe.



Jean-Marie Le Pen

The hope remains, though, that the majority of French voters stand somewhere in the decent middle ground. For it was frivolity, as much as conviction, that led to this result. A companion to Le Pen's seventeen per cent was the showing of Arlette Laguiller, a Trot-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

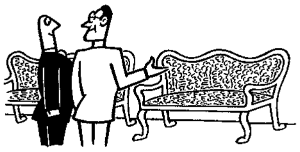
skyite, who received nearly six per cent of the vote—the three Trotskyite candidates together won nearly eleven per cent—along with an essentially sympathetic press. Arlette, as she is always called, has been around since the seventies, and her appeal is said to be the sincerity of her beliefs—though, if she sincerely believes anything, it is that the best path forward for France lies in reproducing the condition of the Soviet Union in 1924. Not one Laguiller voter in ten actually agrees with this, but her supporters prefer the lucidity of her position, ludicrous as it is, to the temporizing of others'.

This persistence of extremes in France is in part a tribute to the national love of the uncompromised position. (It was not an accident that, on Election Night, Le Pen appealed to the lucidity of the French, as one might appeal to the common sense of the British, or to the patriotism of the Americans.) Anyone who had friends on the left in France was astonished to hear how many of them were prepared to abandon Jospin, despite his more than credible record, simply because he seemed too gray and wishy-washy. Jospin didn't want to say exactly what he had accomplished at the center, for fear of being blamed for it by the left, and he didn't want to declare his emotional allegiance to the left, for fear of being disowned by the center.

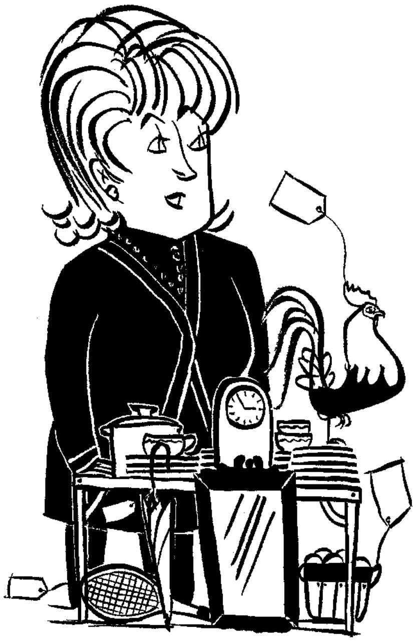
The intellectual classes, who matter in France as they do nowhere else in Europe, share some responsibility for encouraging the kind of self-indulgent utopianism that deprecates even successful parliamentary politics as empty and distasteful. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who died this year, was considered the country's premier intellectual. He wrote extensively and brilliantly about class and taste, and emerged, after a general strike in 1995, as the "master thinker" of the left. His thought evolved, but he was unwavering in his belief that the workings of procedural, parliamentary democracy were at best an illusion, at worst a scam. It used to be said that for evil to triumph it was necessary only for good men to do nothing; in France, historically, for evil to enter it is necessary for good men to tell other good men that nothing is the best thing a good man can do. As the French are now being reminded, it is better to muddle through with your pants around your ankles than to die lucidly with your nose in the air.

—*Adam Gopnik*

HOUSTON POSTCARD
AN ENRON YARD SALE



Ever since Houston's economy shifted, in the nineteen-thirties, from timber and cotton to petrochemicals, people here have accustomed themselves to financial turbulence and its behavioral imperative: standing tough in the face of adversity. Everyone who's anyone has been broke at least once, the thinking goes, so the best thing to do is stop whining, pick yourself up, and start selling assets. John Connally, the former Treasury Secretary, permitted himself only a few tears when bad investments forced him, in 1988, to auction off his Presidential-seal blazer buttons to help pay back the ninety-three million dollars he owed his creditors.



Linda Lay, with stuff.

In the wake of the Enron collapse, Texans are once again in a liquidation frame of mind. In January, Linda Lay, the wife of Enron's former chairman, Kenneth Lay, appeared on the "Today" show and wept as she described how she and her family had lost everything. At that point, the Lays had put homes in Galveston and Aspen up for sale, and were living together in a Houston high-rise.

A couple of months later, Mrs. Lay decided that it didn't make sense for her to hold on to all the furnishings from the houses she had lost. "She realized that it is just stuff and someone else might have a use for it," said Kelly Kimberly, a Lay family spokesperson. So now Mrs. Lay is opening a secondhand shop, called Jus' Stuff, which she will stock with the residue of better days.

Jus' Stuff is operating according to two time-honored Houston traditions: putting the best possible face on bad news, and the belief that commerce cures all ills. The shop, which will open to the public in the next few weeks, occupies a building that is owned by Mrs. Lay and that used to house a pet store, called Kennel Town, in the bohemian Houston neighborhood known as Montrose. The Kennel Town storefront has been repainted a tasteful beige and white, and a crisp new black awning hangs above the entrance. During a recent visit to the store, an eclectic mix of antiques and knickknacks were being installed in little tableaux, each illuminated by a spotlight.

Mrs. Lay has outfitted an interior balcony to evoke a room in an English bed-and-breakfast. "Up there is where they used to keep the dogs," a cheerful blond storekeeper explained. Downstairs, a sponge-painted wooden bunny, a craft-fair refugee, shared a side table with a pair of porcelain cavalier King Charles spaniels. "We have things from five dollars to five thousand dollars," the storekeeper said. (Most of the items had not been priced yet.) Near the front door, a round antique dining table was set with yellow, white, and blue dishes, blue glassware, and white linen napkins. Next to that was a massive pool table, fringed with silk tassels, and nearby sat a hefty pub sign depicting a muscular bartender, and a pair of tin fighting cocks, painted bright yellow. In a corner, a mahogany bed (with lace canopy) kept company with a set of plastic lawn chairs.

There was no hint in Jus' Stuff of the contemporary cool aesthetic favored by Enron's former C.E.O., Jeffrey Skilling, whose River Oaks mansion is aggressively spare and modern. The look here

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was folksy—traditional. Not that tradition is so important to most customers; the past has never had much currency in Houston. As if to underscore the point, a huge desk of indeterminate vintage awaits just inside the entrance to Jus' Stuff; it has nice lines and a sable stain, and the top is decorated with picture frames of all shapes and sizes. They're empty now, the photographs of grandchildren and dignitaries presumably boxed up and moved to a new locale. Anywhere else, the empty desk might seem melancholy, but in Houston it's just a piece of furniture, waiting for the next mogul to claim his seat.

—*Mimi Swartz*

WHATCHAMACALLIT DEPT.
THE MIND GAMES

If you had been sitting next to Frank Felberbaum at the U.S.A. Memory Championship, at Con Edison's headquarters, on Irving Place, the other day, you probably would have heard him recall his gold-medal performance at the World Memory Championship in London in 1995, or his work as president of Memory Training Systems, Inc. (where, for example, he teaches Marriott Marquis employees how to remember guests' names for months), or his decision, a few years ago, to start teaching memory to kids in schools, which explained what he was doing in the Con Edison auditorium: he was there to see his team of high-school and college students compete in the Memoriad, which is what the U.S. memory championship is called. Days later, you might remember what Felberbaum had said about memory in general ("The ability to remember helps lubricate all of life's transactions"), and about memory competitions like the Memoriad ("I think you're gonna see memory in the Olympics within six years, and you can write that down"). But if you were struggling to remember Felberbaum's name you would simply do as he suggested and think of his nose. "Here's how you remember my name," he said. "You have 'fel,' and that sounds like 'fell,' and the 'ber,' which is like 'beer,' and then 'baum,' which sounds like 'bomb,' as in bombs falling from the sky. So you say, 'Falling beer bottles falling from the sky!' And then you look at me and you see my nose, and maybe it's a big nose. So you would look at me and you would have the beer bottles falling and exploding all over my face, with beer running down my nose. That's how you would remember. There's no other way to do it."

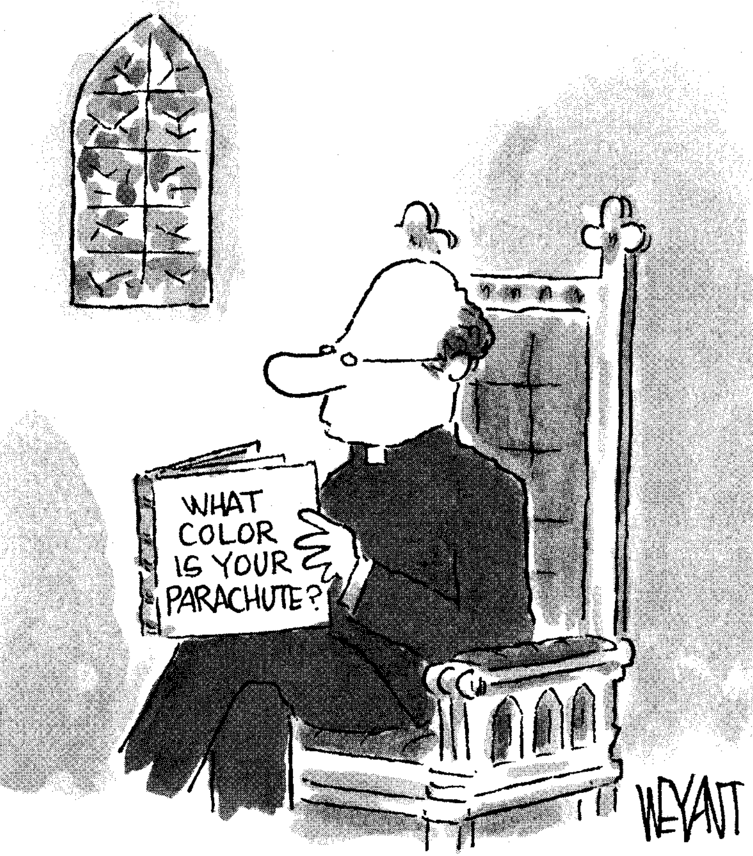
As Felberbaum spoke, his students were sitting at small tables, preparing to devise similar mental images for the first event of the day: the Names and Faces competition. Contestants have fifteen minutes to study ten pages of faces and names, and then twenty minutes to identify as many of those faces as they can. At 9:30 A.M., Ed Pinson, the head judge, looked at his stopwatch and said, "Mental athletes, you may begin." The competitors began staring intently at their pages of faces and names, like golfers standing over putts, but without putters or balls.

Felberbaum went into memory-contest whispering mode. "This is like watching a tree fall in the forest," he said.

"Here's a stat for you," Tony Buzan whispered. Buzan, the founder and chairman of the World Memory Championship, held in England each year, is the biggest name in memory. The mental image that he has in his head about the time he and Tony Dottino, the organizer of the Memoriad, came up with the idea for the Memoriad is capellini: they brainstormed at an Italian restaurant. "In a top-level memory competition," he said, "all of the athletes will use as much physical energy as an athlete in a physical competition. And forty-five per cent of the energy used in the body is used by the brain."

Buzan, Dottino, and Felberbaum were observing the reigning memory champion, Scott Hagwood, a thirty-nine-year-old chemical engineer from Fayetteville, North Carolina, who mesmerized the memory community last year by becoming the first American mental athlete to memorize the order of a full deck of cards in competition. "This guy Scott, he's very tough to beat," Felberbaum whispered.

"Athletes, your time is up," the judge announced. Sure enough, the winner was Hagwood, who had remembered ninety-seven names—a huge memory score.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The second event was Random Words, in which competitors have fifteen minutes to memorize a list of five hundred random words and then fifteen minutes more to write the words down correctly. This year's list began with the random word "despair." When time was called, Felberbaum checked in on his charges.

"Oh, 'vulture'!" said Vicki Roan, a senior from Fort Lee, New Jersey, recalling random word No. 40 too late. "I knew it was like a small mammal, or a rodent, or a dog, or something."

After lunch, a software engineer from Alpharetta, Georgia, in his first Memoriad, won the Speed Numbers by correctly recalling a thousand-digit number to the eighty-eighth place: 76959049004929774628416096696333215863309590544548378967370844100151667584475126707 20827. Then came the poem-memorization event, which was considered especially difficult this year because the poem was by a previously unpublished poet whose work perfectly fit the Memoriad's requirements: non-rhyming and difficult to remember. The poem, by Jeannine Marie Weaver, was entitled "Where Do Balloons Go?" James Kot, one of Felberbaum's athletes, won by reproducing three pages of it. But most of the participants couldn't even summon up the third stanza:

> And I am a balloon!
> My strings of hidden agendas, ulterior motives,
> missed opportunities—
> snapped in two! Severed through the awakening
> of my authentic, higher self!

After the competition, Felberbaum was unwinding with his team and Linda Turner, the mother of one of the athletes. "They did better than I expected," Felberbaum said.

"Well, you want to know something?" Turner said. "All this mental energy, and he can't remember to get milk." Her son was looking uncomfortably at the ground. "I walk around the house and I say, 'Where's my mental athlete? What did he forget this time?' "

"But these are things that he doesn't want to remember," Felberbaum said.

"Oh, I know," Turner said.

"But, actually, he has the words in his head and can recall them."

"If he chooses to," Turner said.

"Oh, yes, yes," Felberbaum said. "Everybody remembers what their mother tells them."

—*Robert Sullivan*

DEPT. OF ACCEPTABILITY
BUTT OUT

In 1986, when "Vienna: Lusthaus," an experimental theatre piece by the director Martha Clarke, was first performed at St. Clement's Church, on West Forty-sixth Street, the *Times* theatre critic Frank Rich hailed the steamy evocation of psychosexual doings in fin-de-siècle Vienna as a work that succeeds "beyond one's wildest dreams—perhaps because [Clarke] has tapped into everyone's wildest dreams." Recently, when the Eliran Murphy Group, an ad agency that specializes in live entertainment, sent a layout advertising a revival of the show for insertion in the Arts section of the *Times*, the paper's guardians of all the commercial graphics that are fit to print rejected it on the ground of "questionable taste."

"It never crossed my mind that there would be a problem," said Janice Brunell, who designed the ad for the show, which is in previews at the New York Theatre Workshop and will open on May 8th. "For one thing, the ad had already run in *Time Out*."

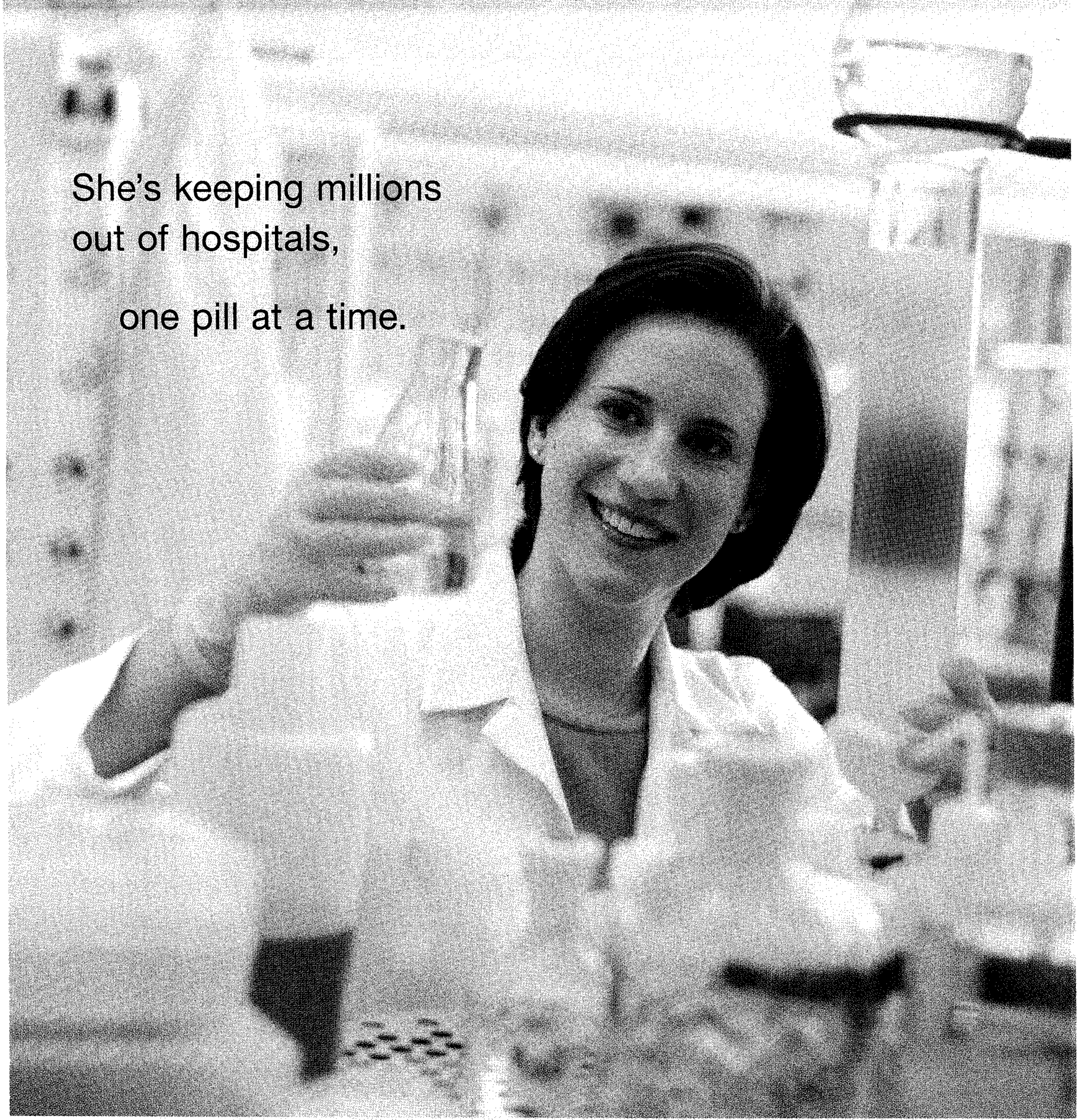
What the *Times*' Advertising Acceptability Department found unacceptable was an ad whose most arresting feature is a female dancer (from the original production) clad in nothing but black ankle boots and thigh-high stockings who is sitting sideways in such a way that the only bare body parts visible below her neck are a shoulder, an arm, a back, a waist, a hip, a buttock, an upper outer thigh, and a sliver of upper inner thigh. Below the logo "Vienna: Lusthaus (revisited)," whose bold, slightly wiggly letters were taken from a poster by Oskar Kokoschka, is a cautionary note that reads, "Nudity and suggested sexual activity. Not suitable for children under 14."

"I was told, 'It's the boots,'" Brunell said. "I've got a couple of pairs myself, and nobody's ever said a thing about them. Apparently, butts are out, too."

To Martha Clarke and the people at Eliran Murphy, the rejection was puzzling. They complained to the *Times* that their Viennese siren wasn't nearly as naked as the nude young man curled up in an ad for last year's production of Tom Stoppard's "The Invention of Love" or the male and female entwined underwater in the current ad for Mary Zimmerman's "Metamorphoses," both of which the *Times* found seemly enough to publish. "And let's not even talk about that photograph of eight naked boys in G-strings running up the stairs of a Polish museum, which just ran in the Arts & Leisure section," Clarke said. "My piece is inspired by the paintings of Schiele and Klimt, and the notebooks of Freud—the period that laid the seeds for the twentieth century's violence, eroticism, and neuroticism. Given that the girl in stockings is an image straight out of that time, what's the big deal?"

Steph Jespersen, an executive in the *Times*' Acceptability Department, maintained that comparisons with other ads were irrelevant. "We evaluate each submission on a combination of factors," he said. "With this ad, it wasn't just the stockings, the boots, or the nudity; it was everything put together." He cited, among other contributing elements, the show's title, which he pronounced "Lust house." (*Lusthaus* is an old-fashioned German word for "summer house.") When he was asked why the *Times* found the poster boy for "The Invention of Love" acceptable, Jespersen said, "We do take ads that have, say, Botticelli's Venus or Michelangelo's David in them—that's art." (The male nude used to sell tickets for the Stoppard play was taken from a nineteenth-century painting by Jean-Hippolyte Flandrin.) And he noted that the *Times* had accepted a revised version of the ad, which ran last week. It features the same dancer in the same pose and in the same state of undress. Now, however, her buttock is concealed by the logo, which has been nudged up and has travelled a quarter inch to the right.

—*Charles Michener*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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
WASTE AWAY

Seventy years ago, the Ford Motor Company's River Rouge factory, in Dearborn, Michigan, was the show horse of the second industrial revolution. Spread out over a thousand acres, it included a steel mill, a power plant, glass and cement factories, and an assembly plant. Coal, iron ore, and sand were hauled down the Rouge River on giant freighters, and were transformed first into steel and glass and then into Model A's, tractors, and airplanes.

Today, there's a new show horse at the Rouge. As part of a two-billion-dollar redesign, Ford is covering much of the roof of its new factory with a plant called sedum, effectively turning the roof into a ten-acre garden. Skylights and giant windows will flood the factory with natural light. And the complex will include acres of natural swales and wetlands. The change will please the tree-huggers but should please the bean counters, too. The "living roof" lowers energy costs by keeping the factory cooler. The skylights and windows reduce the need for artificial light. And the wetlands serve as a natural filtration system for rainwater running off the buildings. It might seem silly to build an environmentally friendly plant to turn out gas-guzzling trucks, but the new Rouge may well offer the possibility of a new industrial revolution.

Or so William McDonough believes. McDonough is an architect and product designer whose ideas inspired the Rouge renovation. He is also something of an environmental heretic. In his new book, "Cradle to Cradle," McDonough (with his co-author, Michael Braungart) argues that the battle between environmentalists and industrialists is as outmoded as Earth Shoes. "The growth/no-growth argument is specious," he said last week. "Growth is good. The question is, how do you want to grow?" McDonough's guiding principle seems simple enough: the source of our environmental woes is waste. There is nothing wrong with cars, TV sets, and running shoes. What's wrong is the waste—chemicals, heavy metals, CO_2—that's produced when we make them, use them, and, eventually, throw them away. Eliminate that waste, and you eliminate the problem.

Right, and why not cure cancer while you're at it? Last time we checked, waste—landfills, smog, river sludge—was the price we paid for a healthy economy. McDonough doesn't see it that way. We don't need to make less stuff. We only need to make stuff differently. In McDonough's future, there would be only two kinds of products. The first would be made of natural substances—he calls them "biological nutrients"—and they'd be perfectly biodegradable. Had enough of those pants? Just toss them out the window, like an apple core. The second would be made of "technical nutrients"—steel, plastics, polymers, silicon, glass—and would be endlessly reusable; old shoes would become new shoes, old cars would be turned into new cars. Everything would be raw material for something else.

McDonough hasn't simply imagined these products; he has started to make them. A new fabric that he created for Designtex, which Lufthansa is testing for airplane seat cushions, is free of poisonous dyes and fibres; you can eat it, if you like. He thinks we'll soon have an ice-cream container that biodegrades in a matter of hours. "It's fun to just throw stuff away," he says. "You could put 'Please litter' on the wrappers." The pages of "Cradle to Cradle" are made not of paper but of a new waterproof polymer that can be reused forever.

This isn't merely a souped-up form of recycling. For one thing, recycling tends to be economically inefficient. For another, most recycling is actually downcycling, with the material becoming less valuable each time it's used. When the steel in old cars, for instance, is melted down, it becomes too weak for making new ones. Products aren't made to be reused. They're made to be thrown out. Products that will live forever (or die right away) must be designed that way from the beginning.

We may be decades—centuries?—away from McDonough's perfect world, but he does seem to point to a path out of the seemingly unwinnable trench war between conservation and commerce. Never mind the invisible hand; McDonough's talking about the invisible hand-me-down. Thirty years ago, two scientists named Paul Ehrlich and John Holdren, who were looking for a way to measure the burden that economic growth places on the earth, came up with the $E=mc^2$ of the modern environmental movement. The equation was I=PAT, meaning that environmental impact was the product of population size (P), level of affluence (A), and technological capability (T). The equation expressed some of the movement's central tenets: population growth, economic growth, and consumption are bad, technology rarely makes things better, and when you combine them all you get Armageddon. Translated into public policy, these tenets helped produce a thicket of environmental regulations, all predicated on the assumption that the only way to save the planet was to set limits and keep businesses and consumers from violating them.

Of course, those regulations have done a great deal of good. But they also encourage companies to devote tremendous time and energy to figuring out how to get away with as much as possible, and to think of environmental concerns only as obstacles to profitability. Environmentalists, meanwhile, are stuck in the role of scolds, nagging corporations, in essence, to wear hemp and drink soy. But McDonough is saying that affluence and technology don't have to be enemies of the earth. In fact, they could be its best allies. We can save the world and get rich, while littering the yard with our biodegradable beer cans.

—*James Surowiecki*

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

THE NEWCOMER

Senator John Edwards is this season's Democratic rising star.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

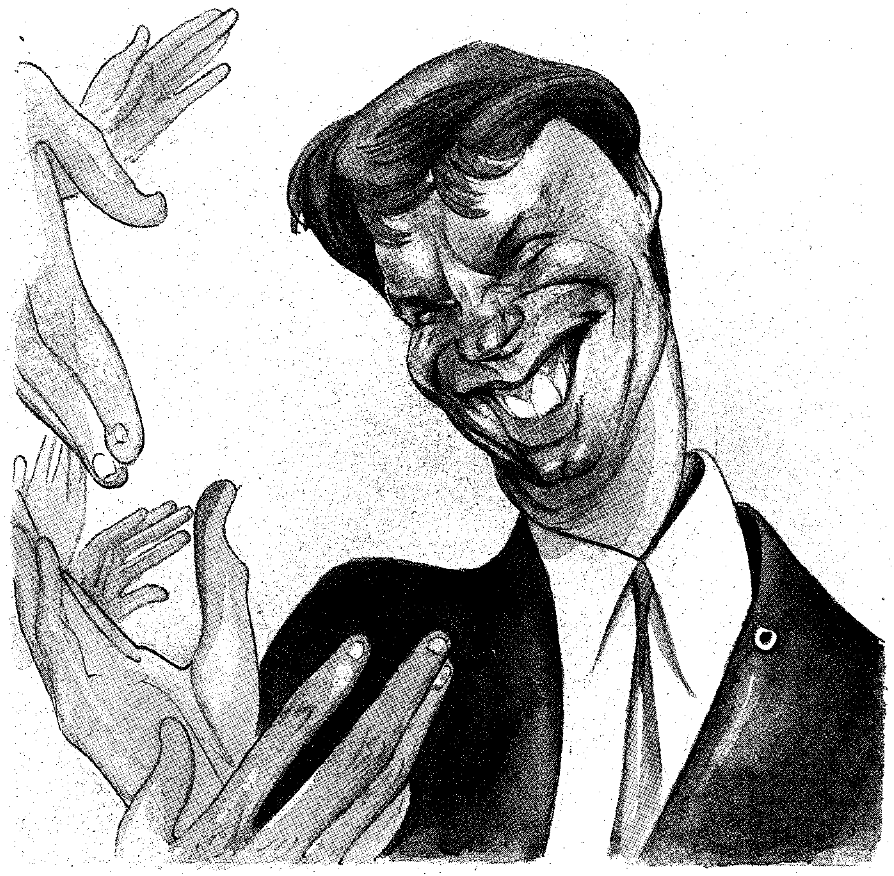
The 2004 Democratic Presidential campaign began more or less officially a few weekends ago, at the state conference of the Florida Democratic Party, in Orlando. So many Democrats are already running flat out for President that it was a relief to have the race come out into the open. Al Gore was to speak at the conference, and the advance word was that it would be his most politically partisan speech since the 2000 election. Gore's appearance, at such a resonant location, dominated the conference, and on a lengthy bill of speakers he got the best time slot, midday on Saturday. (In fact, because things were running late several speakers were bumped to make room for him.) Most of the political talent on display mingled casually with the conference-goers, but Gore maintained the charged scarcity that befits a top act.

He appeared onstage after a dramatic buildup. Florida's junior senator, Bill Nelson, introduced him. The public-address system played a thumping rock anthem. Many of the delegates held up signs that said "Still Gore Country!" People were standing on chairs and chanting, "We want Gore!"and "Gore in four!" And the prospect of seeing Gore emerge, after more than a year of what John Updike once called (in another context) a "meaningful silence," was indeed exciting. It made for a good illustration of the power of branding: Gore is the most famous Democrat after Bill Clinton; he comes loaded with emotions.

The kind of speech that Gore gave is an art form with a lot of rules, like the sonnet. You have to be relatively brief—half an hour is the limit. You have to devote a good portion of that time to a series of required rhetorical exercises: You have to thank your introducer for that generous introduction. You have to praise your spouse and children. (Praising your mama and daddy is optional.) You have to tell a humorous story about yourself, which involves your falling prey to some hint of pretension and being deftly deflated. You have to thank the Party's leading figures and express the hope that the entire ticket is victorious in the fall.

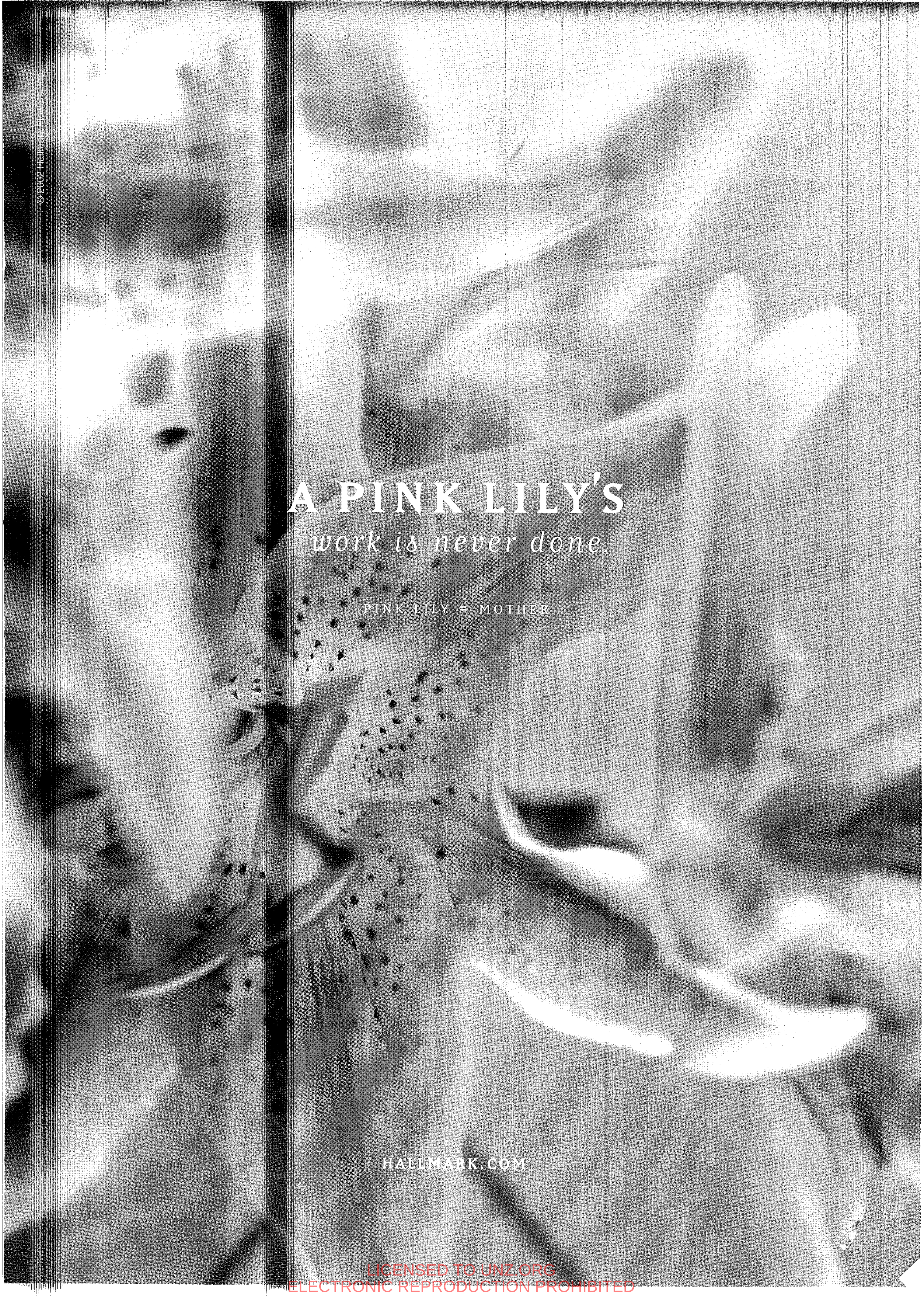
You have to say that you can feel the energy in the room. You have to insist that you stand foursquare with President Bush in the war against terrorism. You have to express concern, however, about prescription-drug costs and the long-term health of Social Security and Medicare, and call for smaller class sizes in public schools. You have to tell an Arthur Andersen joke and, because of the location, a Disney World joke. You may, if you wish, strip off your suit jacket midway through your speech, when you really get going, but you may not remove your necktie. During this portion of the speech, you may also initiate a call-and-response routine with the audience, in which it shouts the same answer three or four times to a series of questions posed by you. You have to end with a call for restoring the American dream. When you're done, you have to bask in the glow of the audience's applause, raising your arms above your head, palms forward, in a gesture that expresses something between triumph and self-effacement.

Gore has been a politician for a long time now—he made his first race for office at the age of twenty-eight (he's now fifty-four)—and, if you count his Vice-Presidential campaigns, 2004 would be his fifth-in-a-row quadrennial national political campaign. He knows how to do the required stuff. In Orlando, he used the time left over to deliver a critique of George W. Bush's Presidency, focussing almost entirely on domestic issues. Gore has always given the impression of being much more interested in government policy than most politicians, and in Florida you got the more



For Edwards, politics seems to be hot, confrontational, and entertaining.

STEVE BRODNER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specific impression that he has been watching Bush very closely. His talk was salted with well-turned jokes and lines meant to be received as slashing, but he also criticized Bush for abandoning the Kyoto Protocol on global warming and obliterating the federal budget surplus and underfunding education and having no real health plan—and you could feel the audience's interest die a little with every specific.

Twice during the speech, Gore quoted Winston Churchill, the patron saint of indomitable people—the second time for his windup line, which was "Never never never give up!" Gore is running.

At an event like the Florida Democratic conference, you see that Presidential candidates sit atop a big pyramid: there are layers of politicians, people who catch the bug early (or inherit it from a parent) and spend their lives running. They were all over the conference, shaking hands and giving out leaflets. Senator Joseph Lieberman, of Connecticut, who had the second-most-featured speaking slot at the conference, after Gore, and would plainly like to run if he can get free of his pledge not to compete directly with his former running mate, just turned sixty and has held elective office almost continuously since he was twenty-eight. Senator John Kerry, of Massachusetts, who also spoke at the conference and is almost certainly running, made his first race for Congress, unsuccessfully, thirty years ago, at the age of twenty-eight. The House Minority Leader, Richard Gephardt, of Missouri, who is probably running, is sixty-one and was first elected to office when he was thirty. The Senate Majority Leader, Tom Daschle, of South Dakota, who is thinking about running, has worked on Capitol Hill since he was twenty-four and has been a member of Congress for twenty-three years, since he was thirty-one.

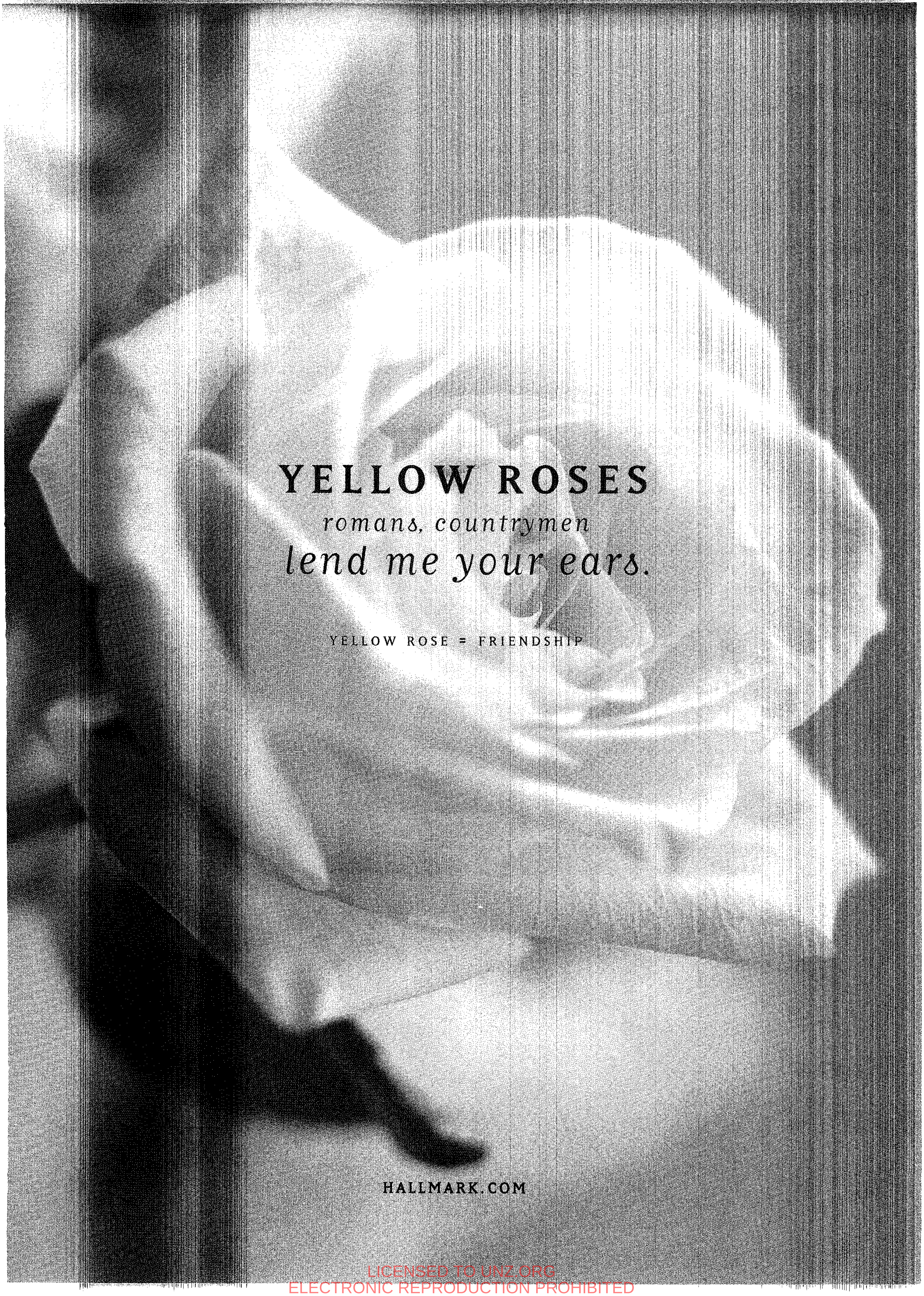
At this early stage of a campaign, the audience for whom politicians are performing—big givers, heads of organizations, committed party workers—is wondering "Can this person win?" In the field of career politics, it is a politician's bad luck that consummate professionalism doesn't necessarily make you look like a winner—or, anyway, professionalism requires artfully indirect presentation. Even those who have got farthest are unprotected from direct challenges by talented beginners, usually already rich or famous, or both, who have zoomed into their airspace.

There are always newcomer Presidential candidates. This time, the leading one is Senator John Edwards, of North Carolina. Edwards won his seat, in a state whose other senator is Jesse Helms, in his first race for office, at the age of forty-five. That was less than four years ago. Edwards has set up a political-action committee, called New American Optimists, that raised more than six hundred and fifty thousand dollars in the first quarter of this year—more than any other "leadership PAC" associated with a possible Presidential candidate—and is budgeted to raise millions more by January. The director of Edwards's PAC, Steve Jarding, came to him fresh from accomplishing the difficult feat of getting a Democrat elected governor of Virginia. Jarding's office walls are covered with maps of the early Presidential states of Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina. The media-consulting firm for Edwards's Senate race, Shrum, Devine, Donilon, in Washington, served on the Gore campaign in 2000, but for 2004 it is rumored to have thrown in its lot with Edwards. Gore's guy in New Hampshire in 2000, Nick Baldick, is with Edwards now. Edwards is making the rounds of Party events—including the Florida Democratic conference, where he spoke just before Gore—and paying frequent visits to early-primary states. Like several other candidates, he has regular telephone chats with Bill Clinton. What you hear about him (since this is the insiders' time, when people don't feel the need to dress up what they're thinking in public-policy garb) is: This guy's a big, big talent, maybe the biggest since Clinton. And that the Democrats can't win without a Southerner at the top of the ticket, because they have to add two or three of what one consultant calls "the country-music states" to the Democratic base in order to tip the balance in their favor.

The weekend before the Florida Democratic conference, I saw Edwards perform at a typical early-stage campaign event, in Oelwein, Iowa, about an hour and a half's drive from Dubuque. (Iowa, of course, is where the first statecaucus vote of the Presidential-primary season takes place.) The event was a miniature version of the one in Florida, a county Democratic fund-raiser—twenty dollars a plate—at which candidates for various offices romanced a hundred loyal Party workers, in the function room of a roadhouse called the Sportsmen, on the outskirts of town.

Half an hour before dinner, Edwards walked casually into the hall, accompanied by his political mentor in matters Iowan, Rob Tully, a former head of the state Democratic Party, and a woman from his office in Washington. Edwards is young-looking, slender, and polite, with a flop of dirty-blond hair and sharp features. He has a tan, almost Latin complexion. His manner, as he shook every hand in the room, was that of a polite and friendly person who has been to a great many church suppers in his life. (And the warmth of his reception was surely enhanced by the fact that everybody knew he had donated computers to the Iowa Democratic Party.) But on the dais he seemed to partake of a deep rural-South tradition of politics as hot, confrontational, and entertaining. He was introduced as a man who had been named the sexiest politician by *People*. He tore off his suit jacket and put on a fake-satin jacket with a big machinists-and-aerospace-workers-union logo on the back. Speaking without notes, in a pronounced Southern accent, and gesturing more animatedly than you can if your speech is being televised, he started out by picking up on the *People* designation. The other night, he said, he woke up with his one-year-old son, Jack. "I'm wipin' my son Jack's butt and changin' his diaper," Edwards said. "And my wife comes up to me, and leans over and whispers in my ear"—a broadly sarcastic stage whisper—" 'You don't look too sexy right now!' " He grinned.

Edwards said that Oelwein reminded him a lot of his home town of Robbins,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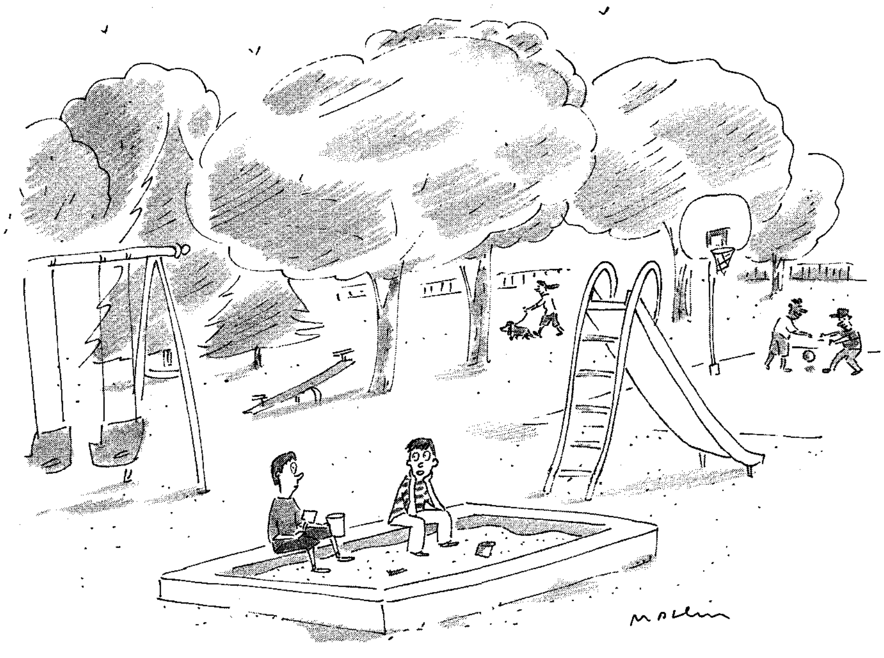
North Carolina, population fifteen hundred. He said this was his third trip to Iowa. Then he got into the main part of his remarks, which took the form of an encomium to Iowa's Democratic senator, Tom Harkin, who is up for reëlection this year. This trope allowed Edwards to lay out his own views in the form of praise for Harkin's views. "He matters to the little guy, everywhere in America," Edwards said. "I'm not talkin' about the powerful. . . . I picture, in my little mind's eye, a grandmother in my little town of Robbins. And, you know, she's standing in her kitchen, and she's thinking to herself, she's got her medicine bottle in one hand. She's opening the refrigerator door. And she's trying to figure out how she's going to pay for food. How is she going to pay for medicine? At the same time she's worried about buying a gift for her grandbaby. And she's thinking to herself, How in the world am I going to do this? In America—in America!—how can we have grandmothers thinking about such things? And she doesn't care one"—a pause; maybe Edwards was trying to think of another word for "iota"—"bit about all those lobbyists working for those drug companies off the floor of the United States Senate."

He stripped off the machinists' jacket. "Maybe I'm just gettin' worked up here," he said, with another saucy grin. He said that his father had worked in a mill and his mother had been a postal carrier. He had attended public school and state colleges. He talked about the importance of public schools and public service. After a while, he said, "One last thought. I'm proud of where I come from. I always will be. And I spent most of my adult life, before I went to the Senate, fighting for people who I believed played by the rules, and got hurt by people who didn't play by the rules."

The next morning, a large portion of the front page of the Dubuque *Telegraph Herald* was devoted to Edwards's visit to Iowa. There was a large color photograph of him shaking hands with an old lady, and under it this headline:

> SOUTHERN CHARMER STUMPS FOR HARKIN
> Rising Star: Edwards Has Been Called a
> "21st Century JFK"

It is immediately striking that Edwards has chosen to present himself as a rollicking, full-throated, us-against-them populist. Gore, in his acceptance speech at the 2000 Democratic Convention, promised to take on "the powerful forces" and "stand up for you." This was consistent with his political record, but it still sounded uncharacteristic. Clinton hadn't run, or governed, as a populist, either—he used the "fighting for" side of the equation, but hardly ever the "fighting against" side. The note that Edwards strikes hardest has been a relatively unfamiliar one in the last few Democratic Presidential campaigns.



"You're five. How could you possibly understand the problems of a five-and-a-half-year-old?"

American populism operates more by a logic of culture and background than by a logic of present-day circumstances. In the 2000 campaign, in which two sons of prominent officeholders, educated at prep schools and Ivy League colleges, were pitted against each other, Bush succeeded in putting himself across as the populist and Gore as the élitist. (Though it seems counterintuitive, in recent years Republicans and conservatives have resorted more freely to populism than Democrats and liberals have.) Edwards is better off financially than either Bush or Gore, but somehow, because of a combination of background and presentation skills, against him either of them would look like the country-club guy.

One of the luxuries of being a new face is that you get fuller control over your biography. Edwards's supporters tell his story as a kind of American success fable. He grew up in a series of Southern mill towns, in a churchgoing Baptist family. He was a high-school football star. He graduated from North Carolina State (which is not only a public university but an Aggie public university), majoring in textile technology. He went on to law school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he met his wife, Elizabeth, who had grown up in a Navy family and had been to graduate school in English. Like the Clintons, the Edwardses were law-school classmates; unlike the Clintons, they both made law review. They went on to clerkships with federal judges in the South, got their first jobs practicing law in Nashville, and moved to Raleigh. They had two children, Wade and Cate.

In Nashville, John Edwards had worked for a business-law firm with which Lamar Alexander, the future Tennessee Republican governor, was associated. When he moved back to North Carolina, he turned down a job at one of the upper South's leading white-shoe firms, Hunton & Williams, to join a practice that was well known for criminal-defense work. One day, a founder of the firm, Wade Smith, a former chairman of the state Democratic Party, asked Edwards to take on a medical-malpractice case involving an alcoholic man who had been given an overdose of the drug Antabuse at a hos-

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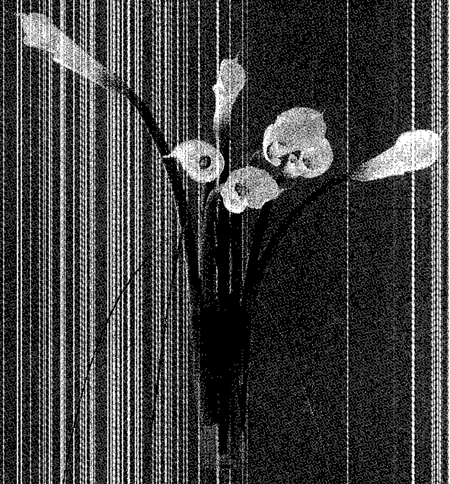

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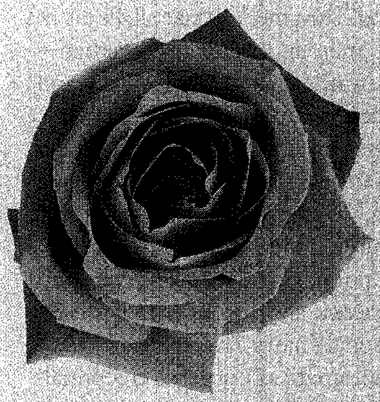

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pital and as a result had suffered brain and nerve damage. Right away, the defense offered Edwards a settlement of twenty thousand dollars. He turned it down. As soon as the case came to trial, he turned down another offer, of three hundred and fifty thousand dollars. When the trial was over and the case was ready to go before the jury, he turned down an offer of seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. And then the jury found for Edwards's client and awarded damages of $3.7 million, one of the largest verdicts in North Carolina history. Shortly afterward, in another medical-malpractice case, Edwards broke his own record by winning a damage award of $6.5 million.

From then on, Edwards was a star plaintiffs' lawyer, trying malpractice, product-liability, and personal-injury cases all over North Carolina. In a field where most people are either obsessive preparers of cases or theatrical stars in the courtroom, he was both. A plaintiffs' lawyer is a legal entrepreneur; the client typically pays only if the lawyer wins, in which case he may take a third of the jury award as a fee and can wind up making considerably more money than a defense lawyer. In 1993, Edwards and a law-school classmate named David Kirby started their own firm—four lawyers, three nurses—focussing on malpractice and personal-injury cases involving children. By then, Edwards was rich, and was one of the most successful plaintiffs' lawyers in the country.

The Edwardses have a beach house in North Carolina, and and on a Thursday in 1996, just before they were to spend a weekend there, their remarkably happy life story took a sudden and almost unimaginably sad turn when their sixteen-year-old son, Wade, died in an automobile accident. Shattered, they took some time off and pulled themselves back together. (Since Wade's death, they have had two more children, Jack and a girl named Emma Claire, who is four.) Not long after Edwards returned to his firm, he won the biggest personal-injury verdict ever in North Carolina (twenty-five million dollars, in a case involving a five-year-old girl who'd suffered severe internal injuries because of an uncovered swimming-pool drain) and the biggest medical-malpractice verdict (twenty-three million dollars, in a case involving a child who had been brain-damaged because of an obstetrician's mistake). Then he decided to quit and run for the United States Senate—picking up on an interest in politics that, Elizabeth Edwards says, he first mentioned to her in law school.

Fortunately for Edwards, both his early legal mentor in Raleigh, Wade Smith, and David Kirby were well connected in the North Carolina Democratic Party. Kirby told me that he called Gary Pearce, a political consultant to North Carolina's Democratic Governor Jim Hunt (a former law partner of Kirby's father), and asked him to meet John Edwards. He went on with the story: "Gary said, 'John who? What's he run for before? Has he supported candidates?' I said, 'Gary, I've known Jim Hunt and Terry Sanford' "—the state's last Democratic senator before Edwards—" 'since childhood. Trust me. You take all the talent of these men and roll it up together—John Edwards has more. So come and spend a few minutes with him.' He came, they talked, he left. A little while later, my phone rang—it was Gary. 'I have one question,' he said. 'Is this guy for real?' "

Edwards had two obvious deficiencies as a political candidate: first, he had no experience, and, second, being a leading personal-injury lawyer didn't seem like an automatically positive credential. His compensating advantages were his life story, his and his family's youth and attractiveness, his speaking ability, and the fortune he had accumulated, which enabled him to refuse to accept any money from Washington lobbyists or political-action committees without having to forgo television advertising. (He ended up spending more than six million dollars of his own money on the race.) He treated his legal career as a point of pride: he'd talk (as he still does, out on the Presidential-campaign trail) about how he'd got justice from powerful, uncaring

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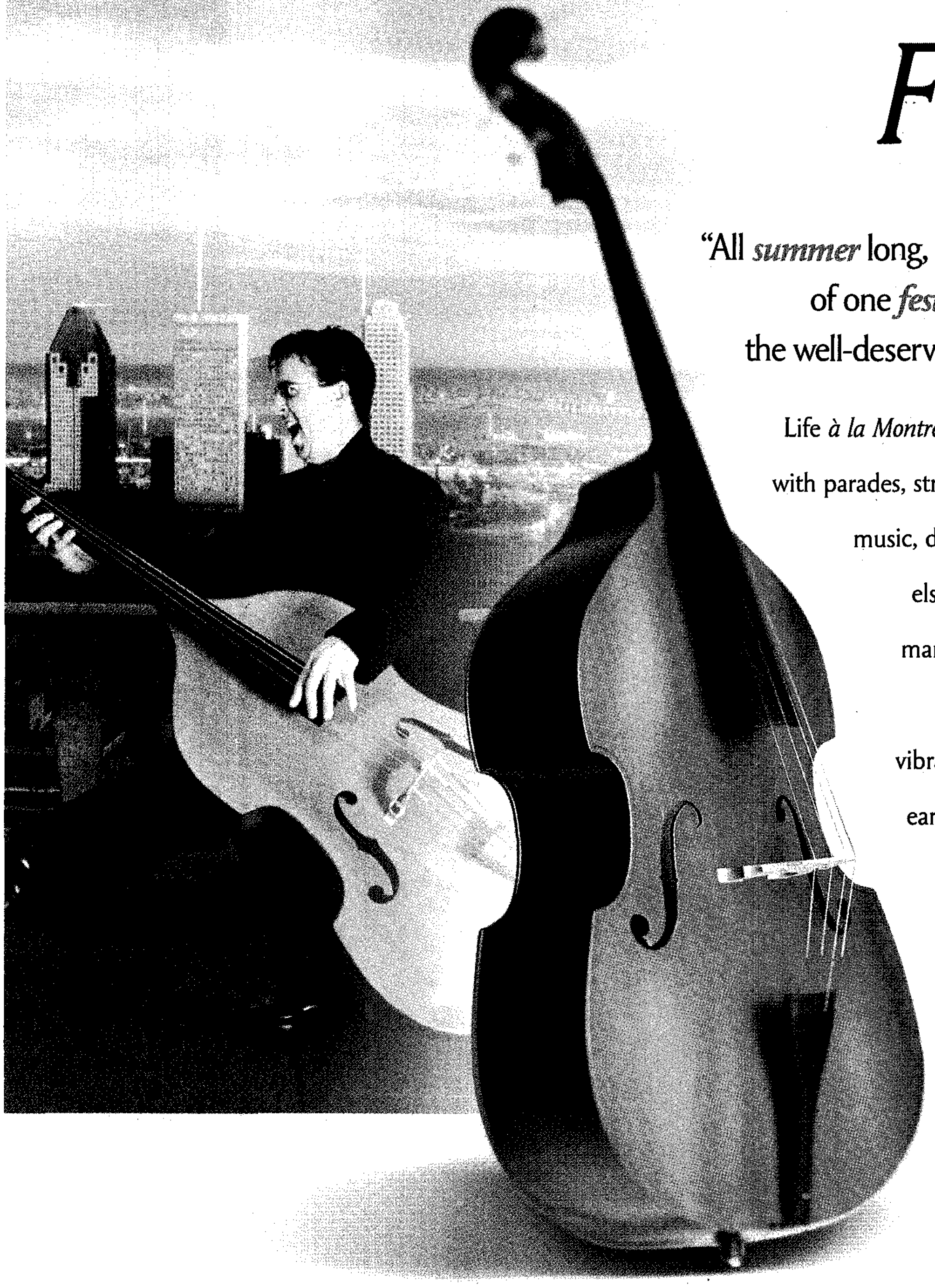

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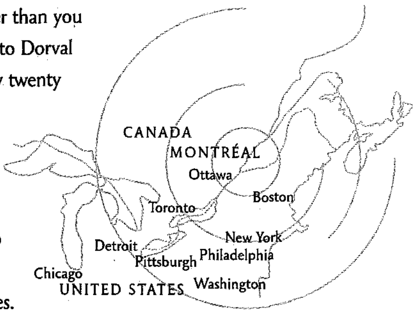

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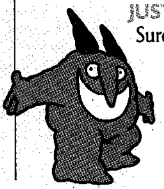

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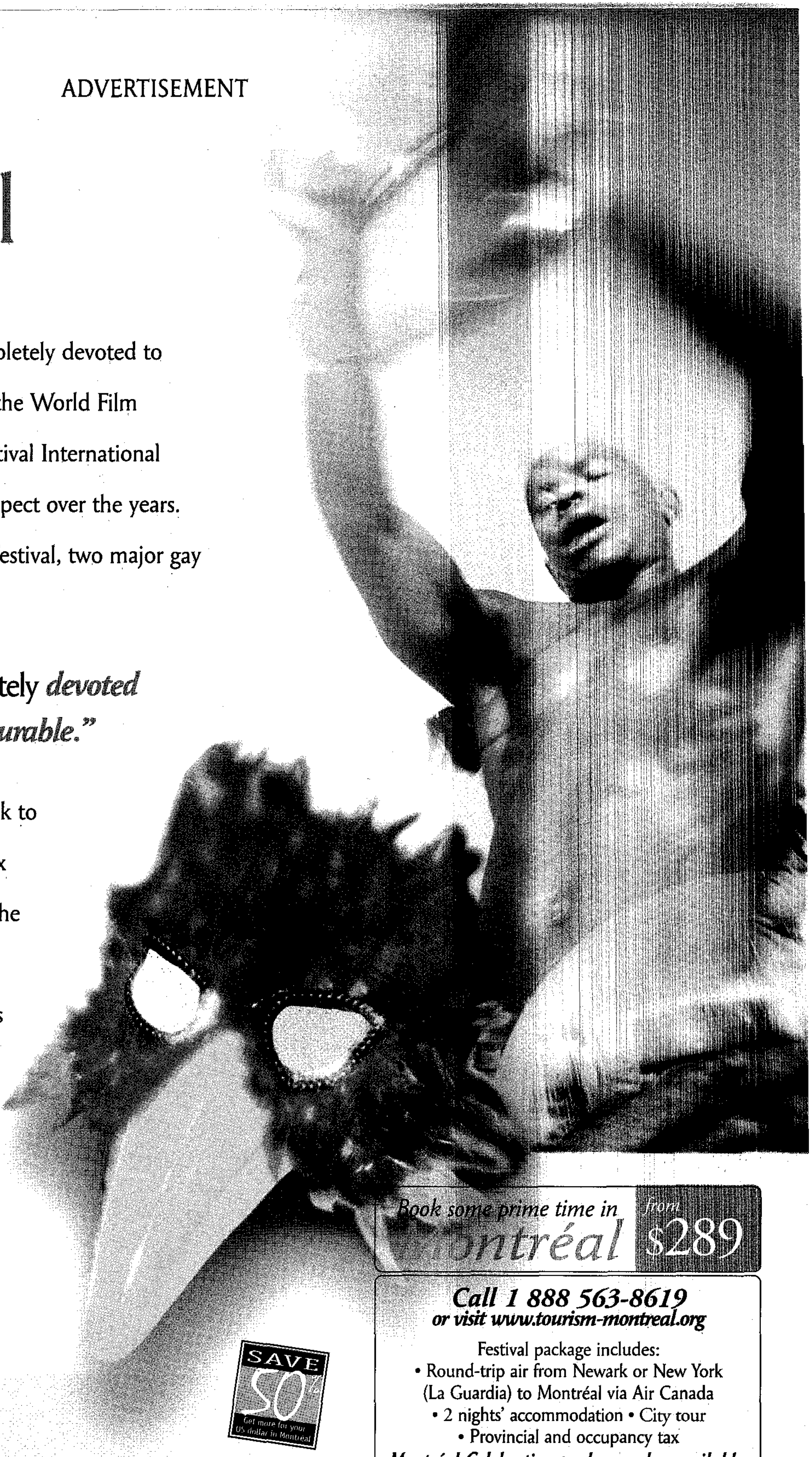
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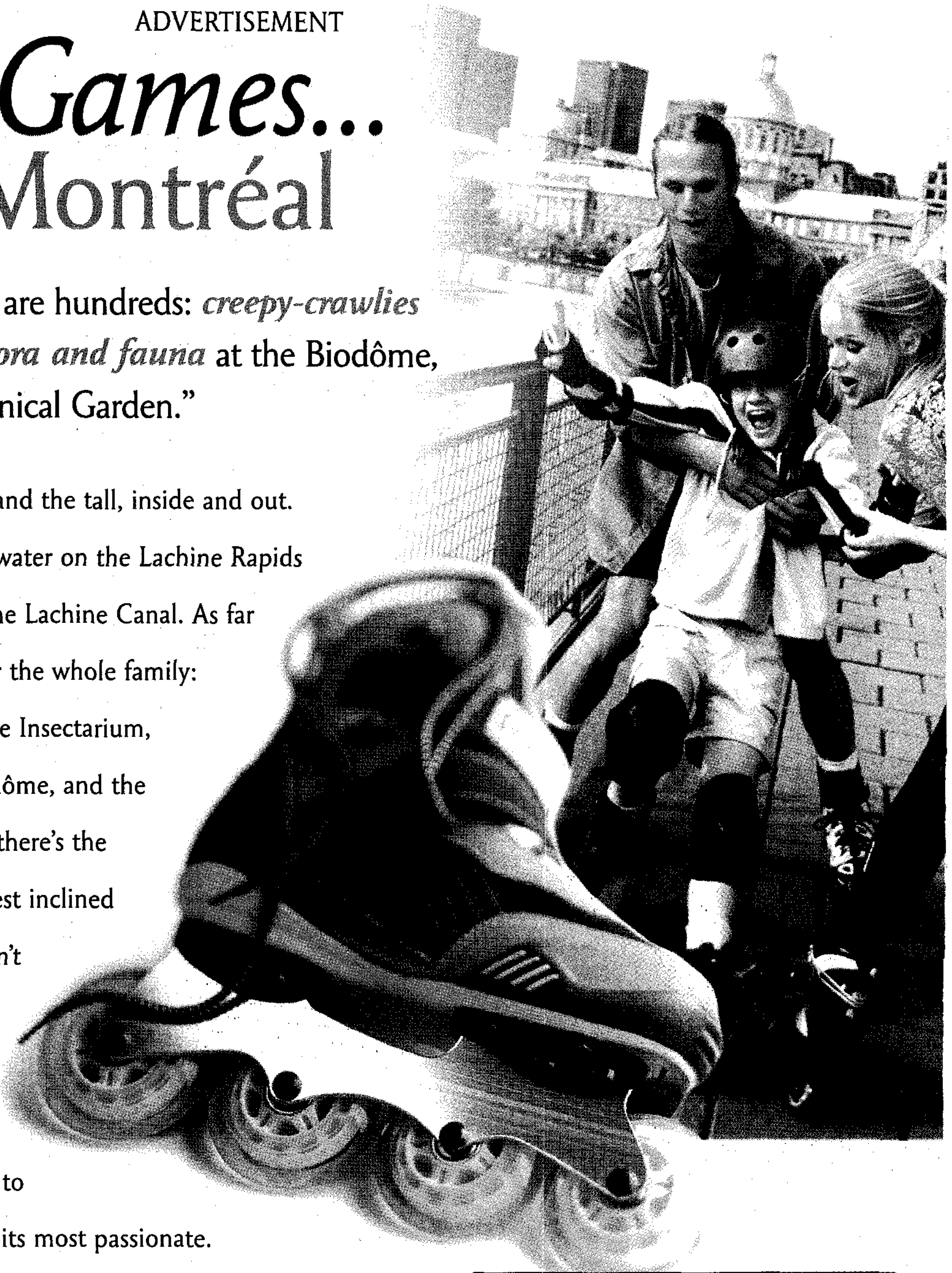

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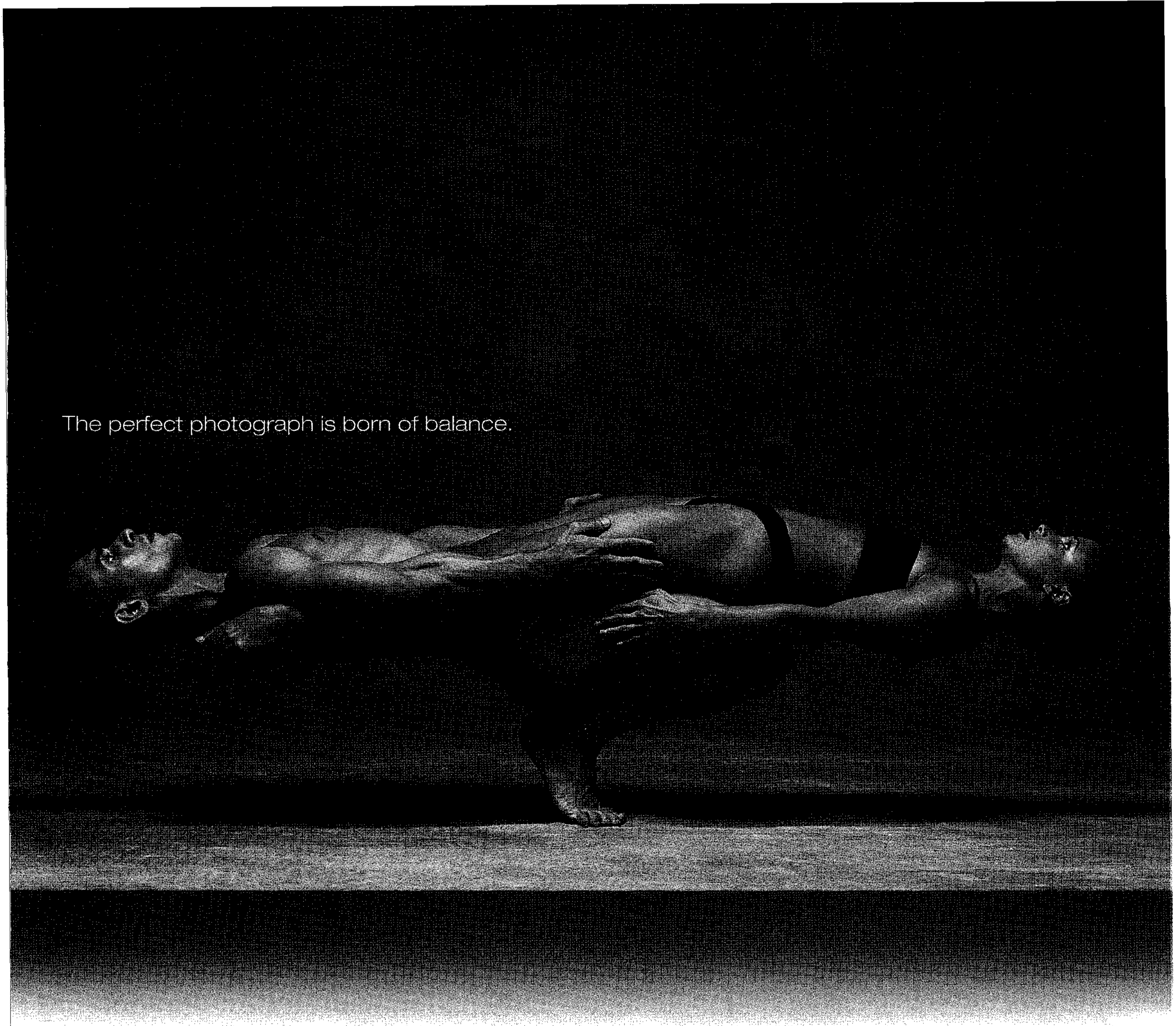
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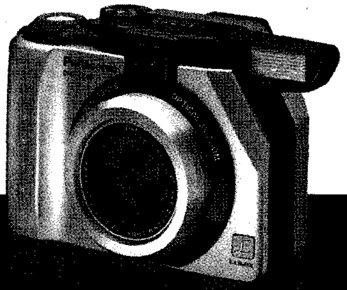

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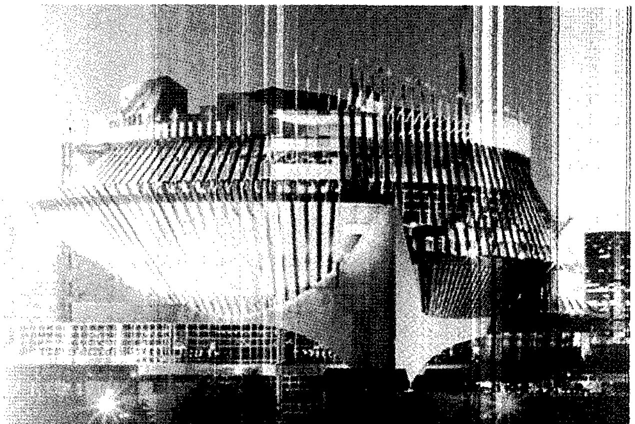

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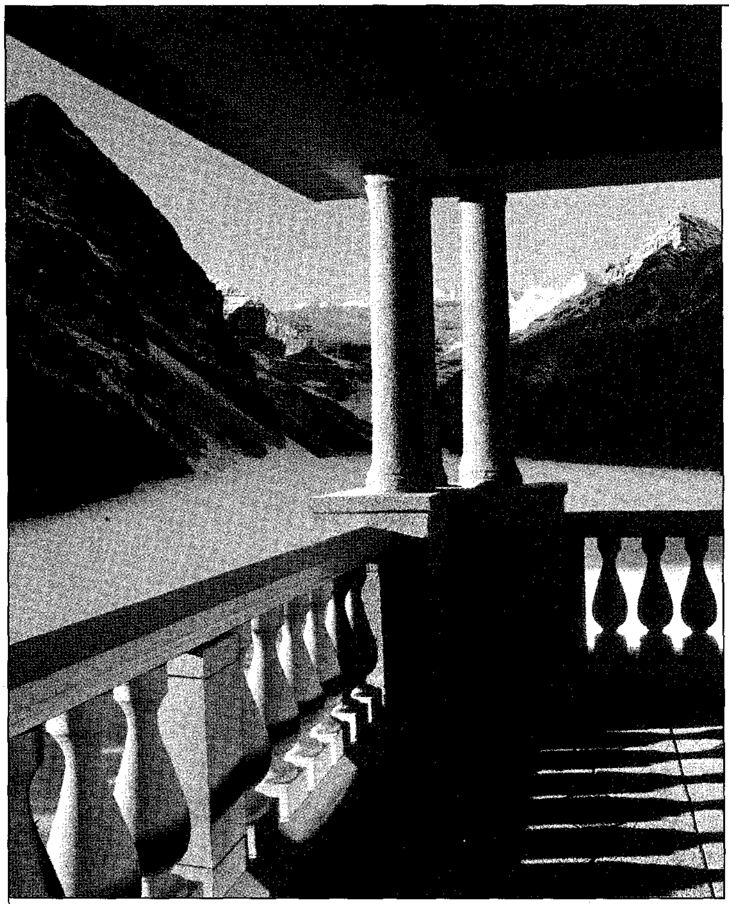

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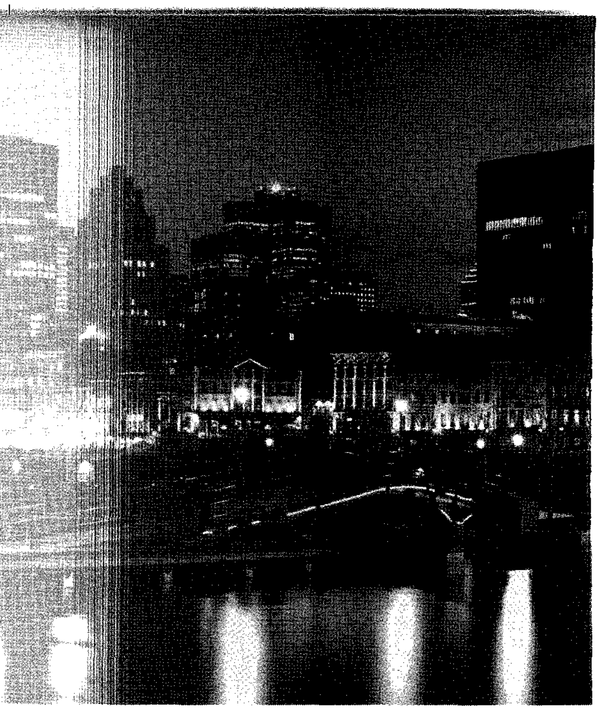
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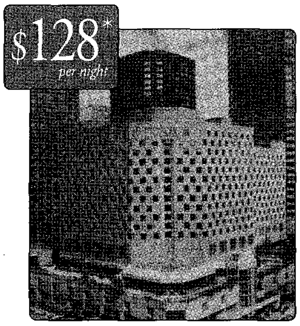
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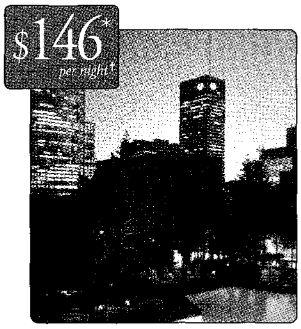
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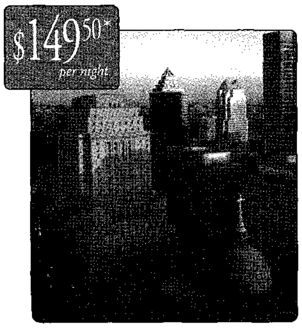
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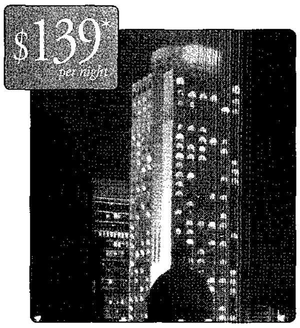
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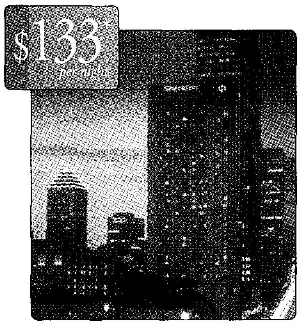
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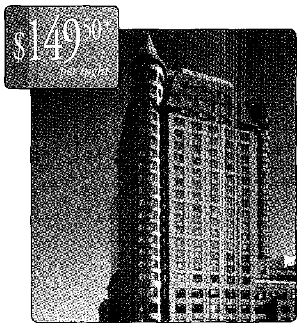
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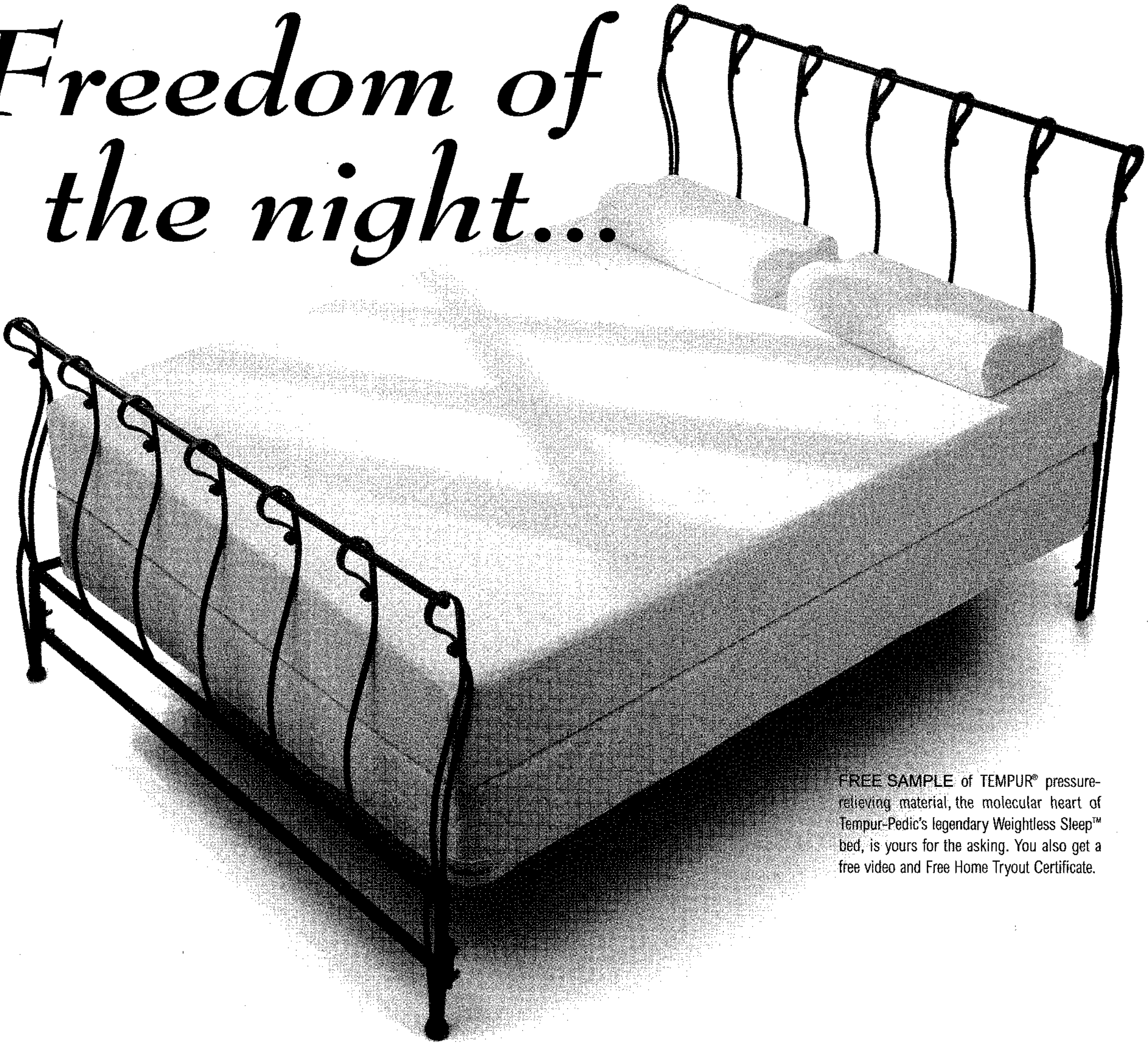

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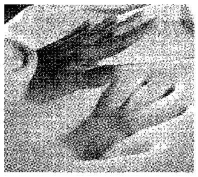

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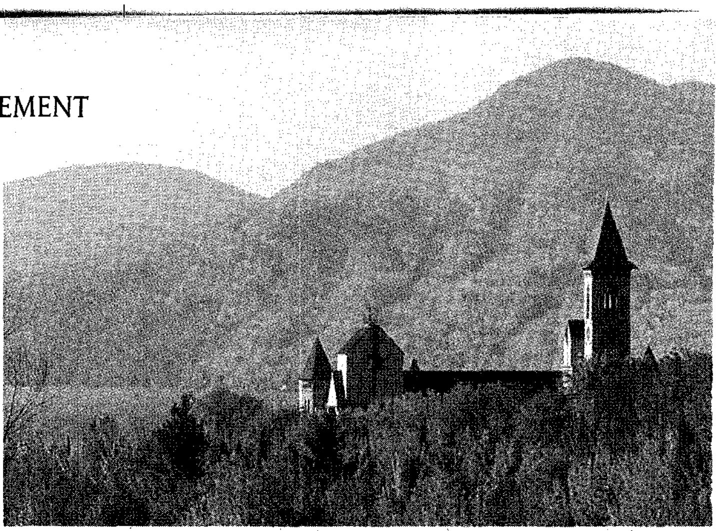

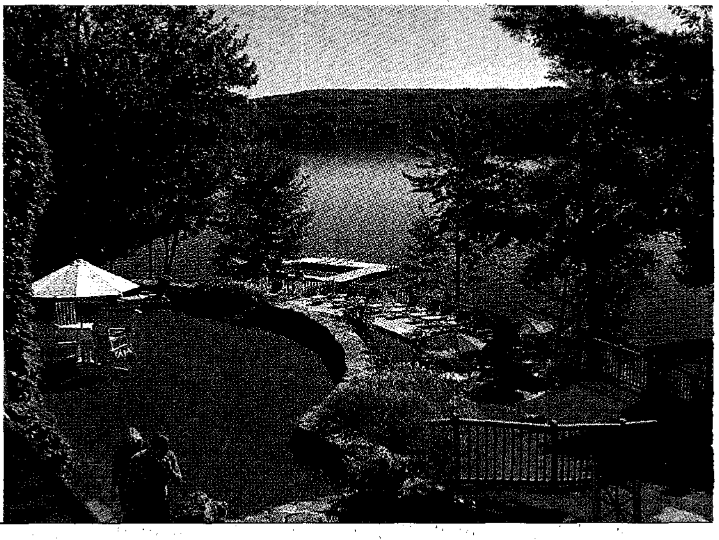

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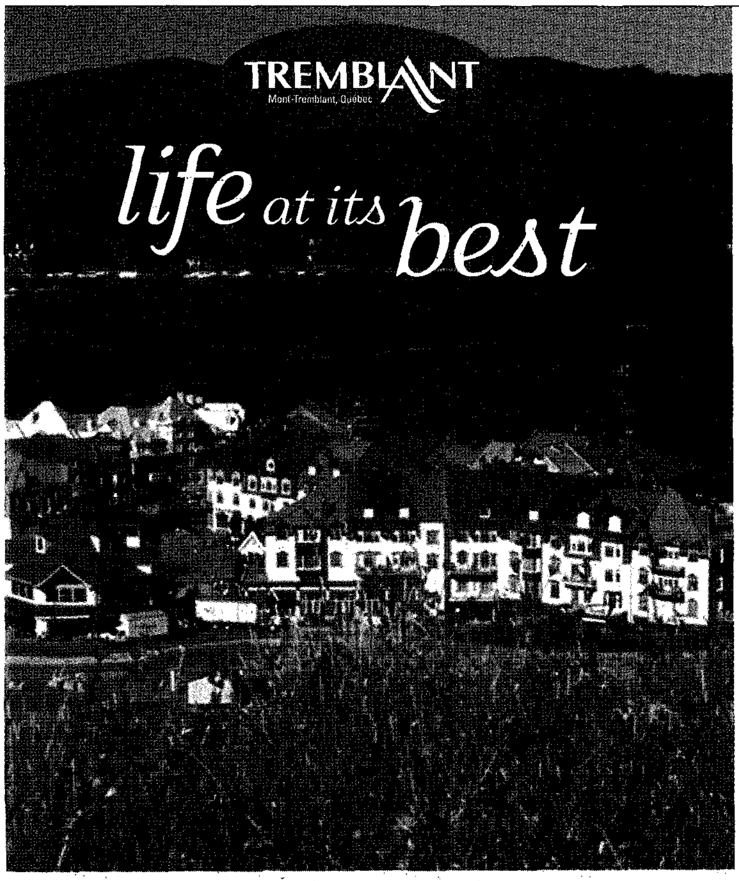

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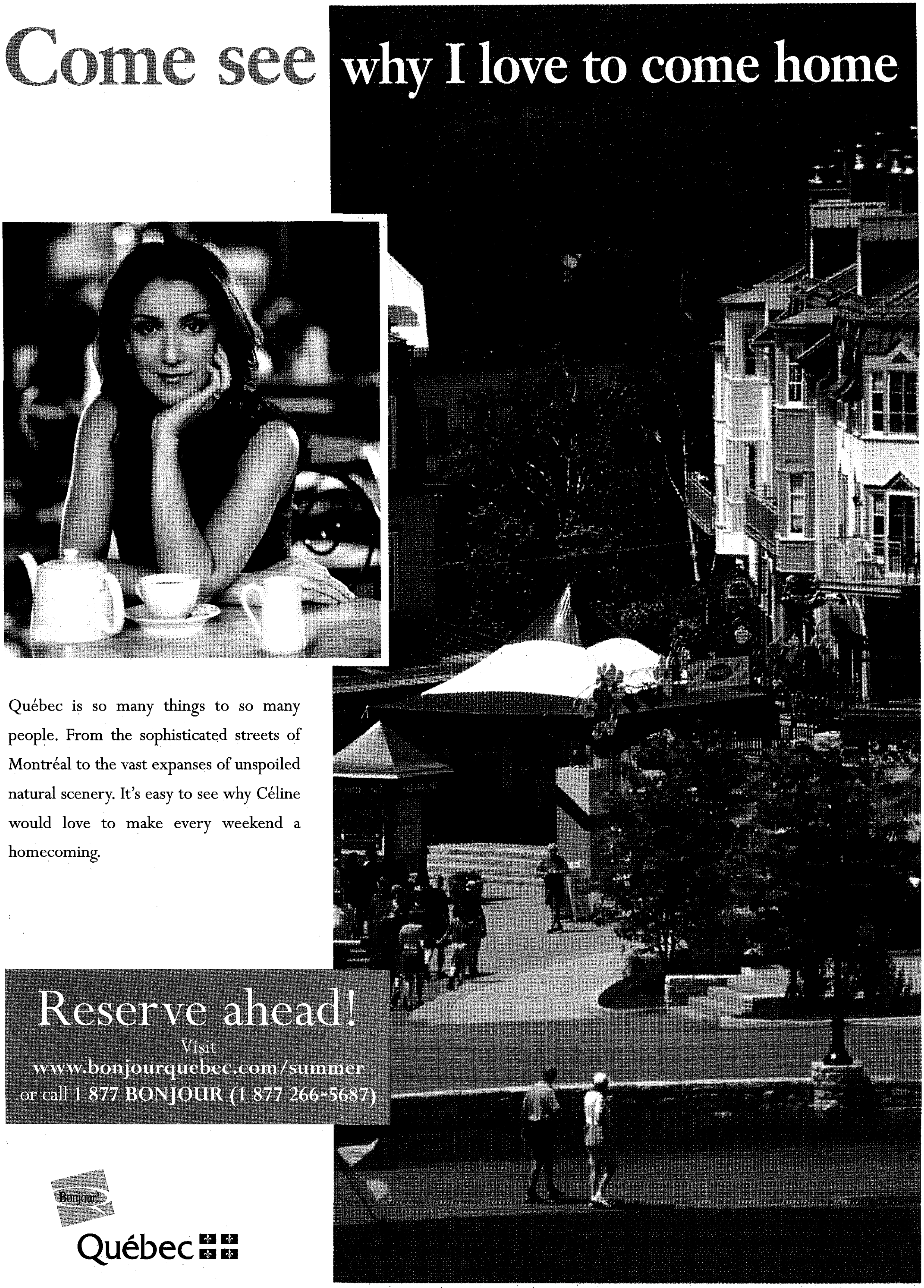

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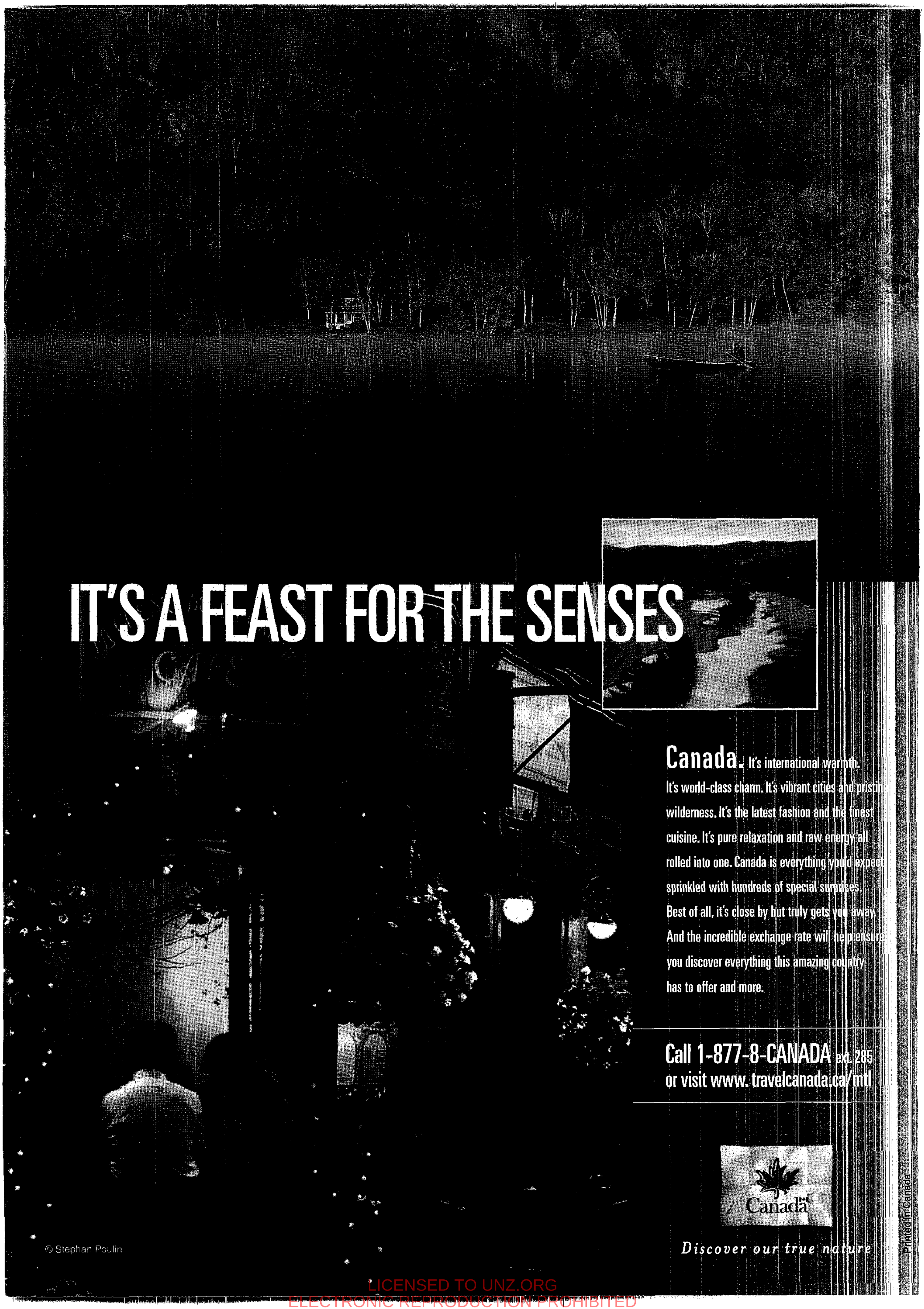

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corporations for little Valerie Lakey and little Ethan Bedrick and the others. Evidently, it worked. He beat D. G. Martin, a veteran Democratic candidate, in the primary, and he beat Lauch Faircloth, the incumbent Republican, in the general election.

Not long ago, I went to see Elizabeth Edwards at home in Washington, and then, a few days later, I had dinner with the Edwardses at a Washington restaurant. They live with their two younger children in a substantial brick house near Rock Creek Park, just off Embassy Row; Cate is a sophomore at Princeton. If Emma Claire and Jack Edwards ever choose to become populist politicians, they'll have the same tone problem that Al Gore has, for the same reason (Gore grew up less than a mile away), but the Edwardses give the feeling of not having been born to the manor where they now live. Elizabeth Edwards appeared vibrant and incautious in a way that few Washington wives do (a reporter for *Good Housekeeping* described her stuffing a cell phone into her bra on the way out of the house), and fiercely ambitious for and protective of her husband.

Talking in an enthusiastic rush of words, she told me about her days as a graduate student. She had planned to write her master's thesis on the similarities between William Dean Howells's "The Rise of Silas Lapham" and Henry James's "The Spoils of Poynton"—her idea being that James had written his book to show that he could address the same themes as his friend Howells had, only more economically. For example, both books used a burning house, near the end, as the—"I can't pronounce French words," she said. Dénouement? "That's it."

For the Edwardses, French seems to function as a symbol of the class they don't belong to. Elizabeth Edwards told me that her husband, back in their student days, had had a summer job in Washington, where, he said, people had made fun of him for his Southern accent. When the summer was over, he told her, "I don't know if I'll ever be comfortable in a place where the punch lines of the jokes are in French." At our dinner, the waiter mentioned that an ingredient in one of the specials was *lardons*. "What's a *lardon*?" the Senator asked.

A little *de trop*? Well, maybe, but this business of class in America is tricky. The Edwardses come from a middle-class, not a poor or working-class, background. Elizabeth Edwards's father finished his career as a Navy captain, and John Edwards's father worked his way up from millworker to mill supervisor. His mother, among various jobs, operated a small business. John Edwards's parents were Republicans. Still, his little-people consciousness, politically advantageous though it may be, seems real. When Edwards talks about the mills—people working long hours on a vast shop floor dominated by the din of machines, living in housing rented from the company, the owner somewhere hundreds of miles away in his mansion—it's with a not fully processed mixture of pride, nostalgia, loyalty, and burning resentment. Emotionally, Edwards, no matter how spectacularly well he does, seems to dwell on the other side of a divide from people who have had special advantages, who condescend or demean. At dinner, he said, "My parents would know in five minutes if you were treating them with respect—whether you were looking down on them." I got the feeling that this goes for their son, too.

Little-people status, defined the way Edwards defines it, does not preclude—indeed, it practically demands—individual ambition. "People in Robbins who worked in the mills with my dad lived for the chance that their kids could do better," he said at dinner. To Edwards, the main point of law and politics should be to change the balance of power in the favor of ordinary people, to remove the roadblocks in their way. "I didn't find my love as a lawyer until I started representing the people I grew up with," Edwards said. "The deck is stacked against these people. I remember working on legal cases and thinking, How can this possibly be?"

As a government official, Edwards has to transmogrify these sentiments into policy, but as a Presidential candidate he doesn't seem to be in a rush to do so. It isn't that Edwards doesn't want to know about the details of government—he has a trial lawyer's confidence that he can master any complicated subject quickly. In the Senate, he is a co-author of the Patients' Bill of Rights; at the Florida Democratic Conference, he made a foray into foreign policy, by crit-

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icizing the Bush Administration, more than the other candidates did, for the insufficiency of its reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. His primary concern, though, is connecting—formerly with juries, now with voters. As we talked, he turned discussions of issues into discussions of feelings; he seems determined not to speak in Washington patois, and to believe that it will be a key advantage over his opponents if he can avoid it. "I think people around the country don't care about the politics inside Washington, D.C.," he said. "They just don't care. People aren't process-oriented. They have real problems in their lives and they want to know what we're doing about it. Most Americans feel powerless to affect what happens. They think the government is way too influenced by the powerful interests. I think they're right. It's true. Their voice doesn't get through."

So what do people want—what would happen if powerful interests weren't in control? "Parents want their kids to do well," Edwards said. "It shouldn't be the lottery of birth that decides how well people do in this country. There should be opportunity. If you grow up in a ghetto, you don't have the same chance as other people. That's wrong. In this country, that's just wrong. When the forces inside Washington work against people—that's what's wrong with the system."

Elizabeth Edwards joined in. "Misallocation of resources," she said.

Her husband frowned slightly: wrong language. "That's just Washington gobbledygook for inequity," he said.

When George W. Bush first ran for governor of Texas, in 1994, one of his campaign themes was "tort reform"—meaning limiting the size of the verdicts that plaintiffs' lawyers could get. Within the Republican Party, it is axiomatic that trial lawyers are bad guys. The idea is that the old, unsavory ambulance-chaser type has now figured out how to get really rich, in a way that drives businesses into bankruptcy and makes worthwhile activities uninsurable. Talk to Republicans in politics, and you'll get a lurid picture of top trial lawyers riding around in private planes and giving lots of money to Democratic politicians, in order to insure that there won't be any legislative limits placed on their sky-high damage awards. The American Tort Reform Association, an anti-trial-lawyer lobbying group, calls them "America's third political party," and estimates that trial lawyers made sixty million dollars in political contributions between 1997 and 2001. (Edwards's PAC has already received two one-hundred-thousand-dollar contributions and two fifty-thousand-dollar contributions from trial lawyers, with more surely to come. "John can go into any community in America and have a potential base in the trial-lawyer community. It's a big deal," Steve Jarding says.)

It would therefore be natural for Republicans to assume that the way to beat John Edwards is simply to point out that he is a trial lawyer. Edwards appears to view that prospect in the way that Br'er Rabbit viewed the prospect of being thrown into the briar patch. Edwards's real weakness is that only six years would have passed between his first successful race for office and his run for President—but that's a weakness that Bush would be ill-suited to exploit, since his first successful race was only six years before *his* run for President. Edwards *wants* to run as a trial lawyer. If he did, and if his strategy worked, it would demonstrate that American politics had taken another of its surprising turns. The personal-injury lawsuit, a drama of individual injustice and recompense, would have become the metaphor that does the political work for liberalism.

It's no accident that the heartland of trial-lawyer influence, and also of powerful opposition to trial lawyers, is the South. A hundred years ago, the South was a poor, defeated, overwhelmingly rural and agricultural region. During the Great Depression, its poverty became truly desperate. What proved to be its economic salvation was building electric power grids and recruiting low-wage, high-power-consuming, labor-intensive industries from the North, notably textile mills. All over the upper South, families left played-out farms and moved to company-owned mill villages of the kind where John Edwards grew up. And many of their children went to college and wound up living in brand-new subdivisions, as Edwards did.

In most places, liberal politics rests on labor unions—but not in the South, because it is a region where unions are weak, and where industries came, in part, to

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avoid unions. Non-economic liberalism, based on causes like environmentalism, legal abortion, and gun control, doesn't work in the South, either, because it is such a socially conservative region. The South does, however, still have a deeply ingrained underdog consciousness, and one place where that manifests itself is in the personal-injury courtroom. Throughout much of the South, trial lawyers are, in effect, the left: an influential group that, instead of converting populist sentiment into redistributionist legislation, converts it into big rewards for a small number of people who have stories of having been screwed by powerful, uncaring figures. Big jury verdicts in tort cases are what the South has instead of unions. It does not seem at all far-fetched to imagine that this version of liberalism could someday reach a national audience. The country is moving more and more toward a courtroom-style politics of anecdote.

On television, traditional evening-news broadcasts have lost viewers, and "news-magazine" shows often have the feeling of news as tort law, featuring narratives of individuals fighting back against doctors and corporations. Tort-law movies like "Erin Brockovich" and "A Civil Action" are a popular new genre. The airwaves are full of conservative populists railing against the liberal élite, and their force is much more a function of how dramatic their stories and their rhetoric are than of their actual circumstances. (Bill O'Reilly is no less effective as a populist for being rich than John Edwards is.) A climactic moment in every State of the Union Message is the introduction of the heroic "real people" sitting in the gallery next to the First Lady.

Presidential campaigns are always presented as being about the larger-than-lifeness of the candidate, but they embody something going on in the society, too. Edwards is a political novice who aims at communicating to people one wouldn't ordinarily think of as populists—middle-class and lower-middle-class suburbanites—that he completely gets it ("it" being the way the big guys are messing with their lives), and that he's going to do something about it. As a candidate, he is placing a bet that there's much more aggrievement around in the lone superpower than most people think. No matter how his candidacy turns out, he may well be betting right. ♦

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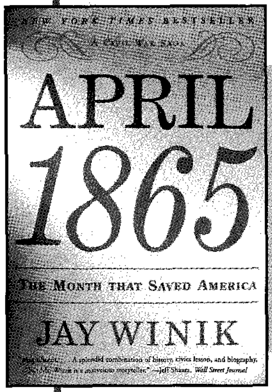

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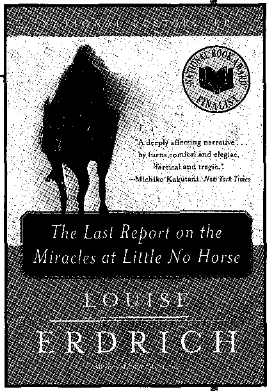

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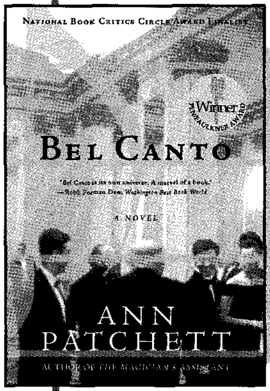

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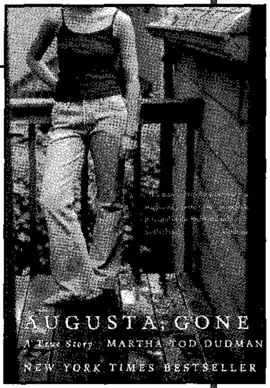

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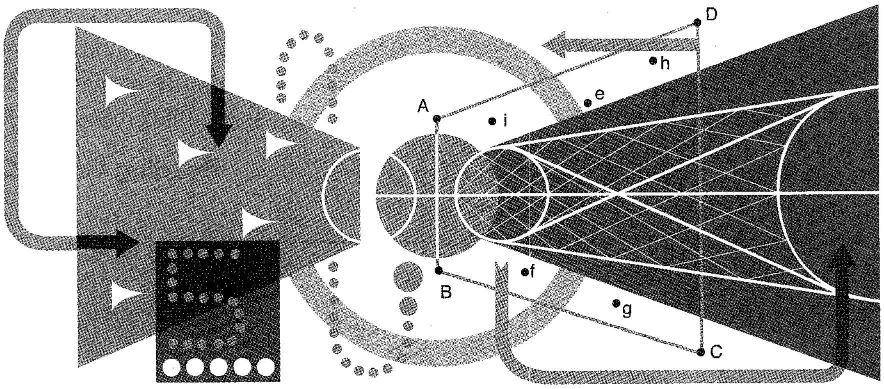
SPORTS-INTERVIEW SHOCKER

BY STEVE MARTIN



RICHARD MC GUIRE

In a recent interview on Sports Talk radio, basketball forward Pete (Fleet) Vliet said, "If we're going to win today, we're going to have to put some points on the board." The sports world puzzled over what he meant. " 'Points on the board'? What kind of points? Does he mean points as in points in the score? And this 'board.' Does he mean game board? Surfboard?" Such was the response of most aficionados. Could he have meant that, in order to win, he was going to have to "score" a number of "points" that would amount to more than the other team scored? Or was he talking about mathematical points of infinitely small mass? Most of us have never heard the words "points" and "board" put together quite like this. "Think of it this way," said Dr. Karl Pepper, the director of the Wha . . . ? Institute of Language. "Think of an envelope. Now picture that inside the envelope are all the expressions we think of as normal. Now imagine that someone is taking these normal expressions and pushing them around, enlarging them, so that they 'push against' the envelope. This is what concepts like 'putting points on the board' are doing."

Later in the interview, Fleet said, "If we want to win, we're going to have to go out there and *play basketball.*" Head scratcher, yes. Incomprehensible, no. Dr. Pepper analyzed it thus: "This concept is best understood by expressing its opposite—if we want to win, we're going to have to go out there and not play basketball. There is no way to win by *not* playing basketball. Here's an analogy that might help: Think of a box. Now think of all the normal ways of thinking as being inside the box. But now imagine a way of thinking that is so unusual as to be outside the box."

Finally, Fleet ended the interview by saying, "We're not going to win unless we hustle to the ball." Talk-radio sports lines were abuzz. The general interpretation of this final phrase seemed to be "If we want to win, we—that is, our team—must arrive at the ball, pick it up, and bounce it around. For if we have the ball our odds of scoring, of *putting points on the board* (!), are greater than the opposing team's." Of Fleet's last remarks, Dr. Pepper said, "If we conceive of normal thought as existing in a series of envelopes, and these envelopes are put in boxes that are lined up end to end, and these thoughts push perpendicularly to the conventional thrust of ideas, then we are looking at what we are talking about."

It seems that what today's sports figures are saying is that if they try very hard and play better than their opponents, then it is possible to win a game by beating the other team, but only if, at the end of the game, they have more points by at least one. ♦

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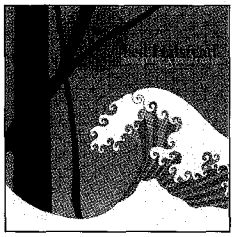
The Nu Soul movement that spawned artists such as Maxwell and D'Angelo has a new protégé in singer-songwriter-producer Shand.



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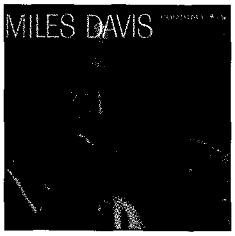
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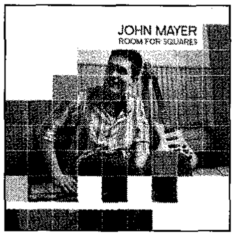
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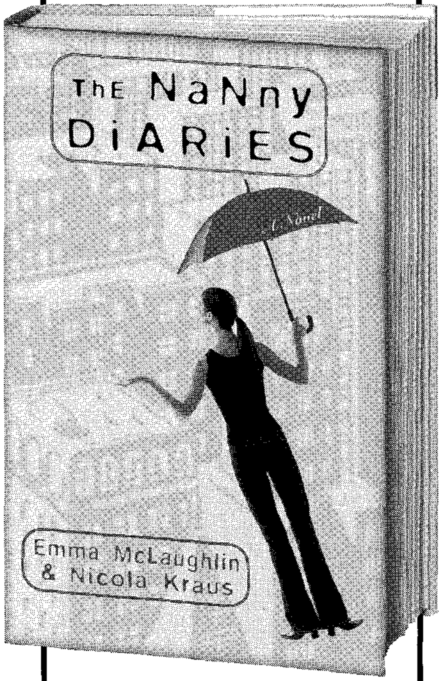

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AROUND CITY HALL

FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

Boss Tweed's monument just can't stay out of trouble.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

On December 12, 1870, the New York *Sun*, a newspaper that had been hostile to Boss Tweed, suddenly proposed that a monument be raised in his honor. Whether the suggestion represented a change of heart or was just a joke—the paper recommended that Tweed be cast in a nautical pose, repairing the lines on his steam yacht in the midst of a hurricane—is difficult to say. In any case, Tammany Hall embraced the *Sun's* idea. The Tweed Testimonial Association was formed, and a circular was printed—at public expense—to solicit donations for the erection of a statue of Tweed "in consideration of his services to the Commonwealth of New York."

Tweed was at that point at the height of his power, and few were the projects that he didn't have a hand in. It was Tweed who pushed through the bill that legalized millions of dollars' worth of watered Erie Railroad stock, and also Tweed who arranged for the Albany legislature to incorporate the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Among the many posts he held simultaneously were that of New York state senator, head of the city's Department of Public Works, president of the County Board of Supervisors, and Grand Sachem of Tammany Hall. Not surprisingly, the Testimonial Association made rapid headway, collecting nearly eight thousand dollars by the middle of March. Meanwhile, unsolicited suggestions for the design of the monument poured in. The *Herald* recommended that the Boss be rendered in Indian garb, the city charter in one hand and a peace pipe in the other. The virulently anti-Tammany *Times* proposed that the statue of George Washington in Union Square Park be taken down and replaced by one of Tweed, to illustrate the progress of history. Finally, Tweed himself graciously refused the honor. "Statues are not erected to living men, but to those who have ended their careers," he wrote. "I claim to be a live man, and hope (Divine Providence permitting) to survive in all my vigor, politically and physically, some years to come." The *Sun* printed Tweed's demurral under the headline "A GREAT MAN'S MODESTY," with the subhead "The Hon. William M. Tweed declines the Sun's Statue—characteristic letter from the great New York philanthropist—he thinks that virtue should be its own reward."

In the end, of course, Tweed still got his monument, albeit an unintended one. Situated on Chambers Street, just behind City Hall, the building that started out as the New York County Courthouse but eventually became known as the Tweed Courthouse features a neoclassical façade, a five-story Romanesque Revival rotunda, and thirty courtrooms, the most ornate of which are resplendent with granite columns and polychrome brick. It is among the most sumptuous public buildings in the city and, on a constant dollar basis, without question the most expensive. The final bill for its construction, which stretched over twenty years, exceeded fifteen million dollars—more than four times the cost of the Houses of Parliament, as outraged observers pointed out, and twice what the United States had recently paid to purchase Alaska.

Sometime in the next few days, painters and floor-layers will put the final touches on the job of restoring the Tweed, a monumental undertaking in itself. The project, begun in 1999, involved, on any given day, more than two hundred construction workers, along with brass smiths in India, tile-makers in England, foundrymen in Alabama, and stonecutters in Georgia, and it proceeded at a near-record pace. Perhaps inevitably, given the building's history, the success of the project has been glossed not just in architectural terms but in moral ones as well. Speaking at the courthouse back in December, Mayor Rudy Giuliani boasted that the restoration would "purify the

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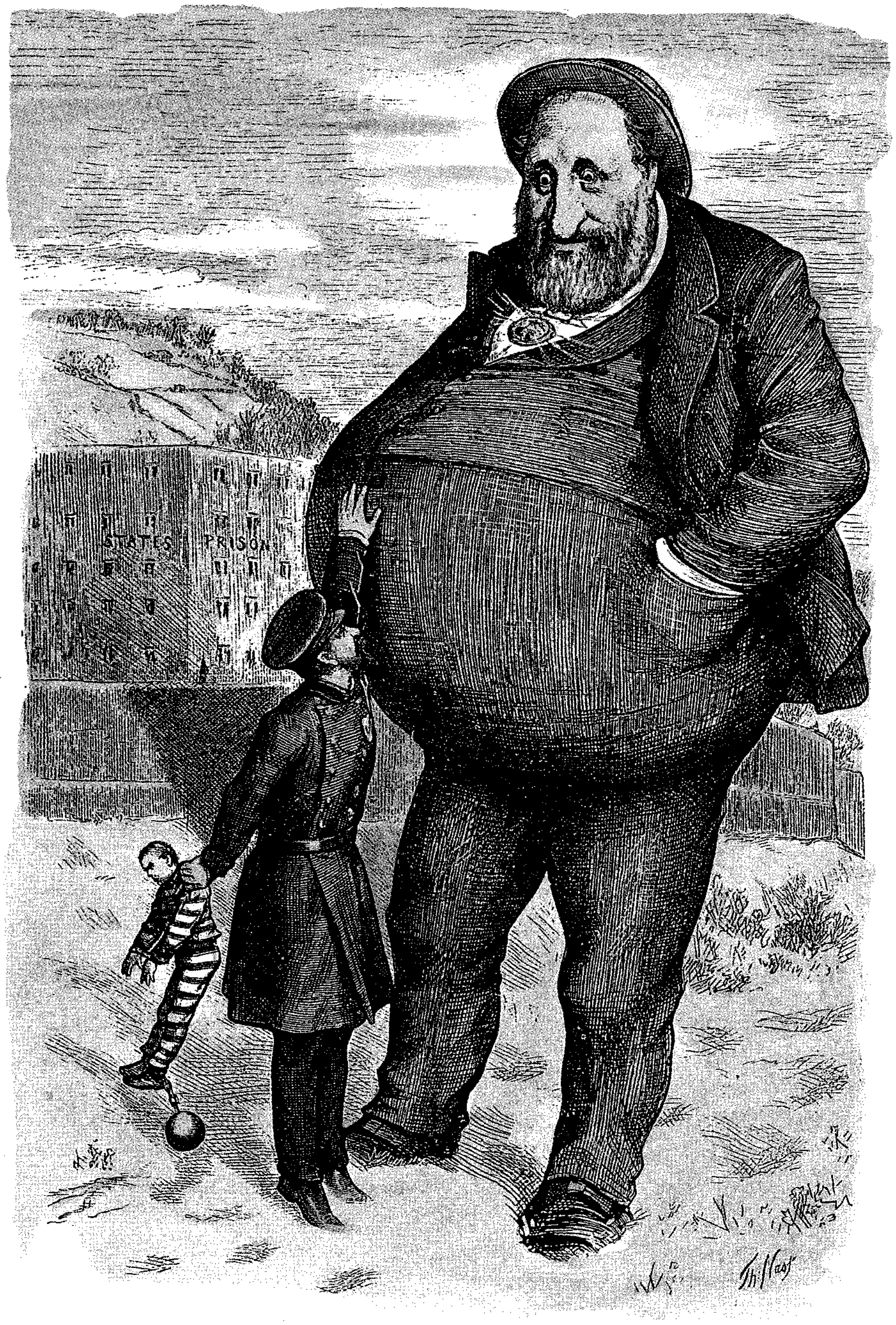
building and remove the stench of Boss Tweed and corruption." As is so often the case with such high-minded enterprises, however, the real lesson has proved less edifying. Completed at a cost of nearly ninety million dollars, the Tweed restoration is shaping up into a second municipal debacle—one that, although quite different from the first, is not quite different enough.

William Marcy Tweed, who was not actually named William Marcy Tweed, was born on April 3, 1823, in lower Manhattan. In all likelihood, his middle initial stood for his mother's maiden name, Magear, and Marcy was another joke perpetrated by the newspapers. (In the eighteen-thirties, William L. Marcy served three terms as governor of New York, and is credited with adapting to political use the motto "To the victor belongs the spoils.") A contemporary of Tweed's described him as a good-looking young man, "with dark brown hair and clear, gritty eyes"; however, photographs show that by middle age he was bald and stout. In the famous Thomas Nast cartoons, he is inevitably pictured bursting out of his waistcoat—at his heaviest, Tweed weighed close to three hundred pounds—with a huge diamond glittering on his shirtfront.



William M. Tweed, drawn by Thomas Nast. His ring of grafters plundered the city.

Both in his strengths and in his limitations, Tweed was a quintessential Tammany man—or, at least, what we have come to consider one. He was not particularly eloquent—"I can't talk, and I know it," he once said—or even clever, and his early years were devoted to a series of ventures that mostly ended badly. For a while, Tweed worked with his father-in-law manufacturing brushes, before following his father into chairmaking. He was active as a volunteer fireman, and in 1850 ran—and lost—his first campaign, for assistant alderman. Two years later, he was elected to Congress, where he served, without distinction, as a member of the Committee on Invalid Pensions. He passed no legislation, made one speech, and according to one of his biographers, Leo Hershkowitz, the author of "Tweed's New York," was not renominated. In 1861, his chair business failed. Filing for bankruptcy, Tweed offered the following list of his worldly assets: "Three Hats, Two Caps, Two Thick Overcoats, One Thin Overcoat, Three Pair Pants, Six Vests, Two Dress Coats, One Business Coat, Three Pair Boots, Two Pair Shoes, Ten Pair Socks, Thirty Collars, Twelve Linen Shirts, Twelve Cotton Shirts, Ten Handkerchiefs."

Tweed's one substantial talent seems to have been a grasp of city politics, which is to say, of human frailty. In 1863, he was appointed deputy street commissioner, and as another of his biographers, Alexander B. Callow, Jr., points out in "The Tweed Ring," over the next four years he proceeded to quadruple the department's payroll. In 1864, he bought a controlling interest in a printing company, which quickly became the city's supplier of vouchers and stationery. As a member of the Board of Supervisors, Tweed organized his first ring, which took a neat fifteen per cent off the top of every city contract. (A "ring," in the words of one of Tweed's henchmen, was "a collection of men united for some common object.") Five years after declaring bankruptcy, he owned a brownstone in Manhattan and a home in Greenwich, Connecticut. In 1871, when his daughter Mary Amelia got married, the *Sun* reported that the scene in Tweed's Fifth Avenue mansion was so splendid that it "beggared description." The *Herald* estimated the value of the wedding gifts at seven hun-

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—*Kenneth Koch*

dred thousand dollars—roughly ten million dollars in today's money.

As an exercise in graft, the courthouse has been described as Tweed's masterwork, and the brazenness of the self-dealing is almost unimaginable today, Enron notwithstanding. The original, fairly modest appropriation stipulated that the entire courthouse, construction of which began in 1861, should cost no more than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, including all its furnishings. But Tweed convinced his colleagues on the Board of Supervisors that this was too niggardly. First, they added a million dollars to the project, then an additional eight hundred thousand, and so on. It is estimated that less than twenty-five per cent of expenditures went toward actual construction. A carpenter named George Miller, also known as Lucky, was paid three hundred and sixty thousand dollars for one month's work. Andrew Garvey, a plasterer, received five hundred thousand dollars for a year's work, and then a million dollars to repair that work. (He became known as the Prince of Plasterers.) For three tables and forty chairs, the city paid nearly a hundred and eighty thousand dollars; for "brooms, etc.," forty-one thousand dollars. One check, in the amount of sixty-four thousand dollars, was made out simply to "T.C. Cash." The marble for the building was quarried near Tuckahoe, New York, until Tweed and his cronies acquired a quarry in western Massachusetts.

Five years into the project, after millions had been disbursed with little to show for it, a group of outraged citizens demanded an inquiry, and the Special Committee to Investigate the Courthouse was formed. It acted quickly, and found no justification for concern, even as it ran up a bill of more than eighteen thousand dollars for twelve days' work. Nearly half that amount went to Tweed's printing company, which published the committee's official report.

Jack Waite is the architect who oversaw the Tweed's restoration, and on a spectacular spring morning not long ago I arranged to meet him on the courthouse's front steps, which lead up to three sets of giant walnut doors. As I waited, people kept coming up to me and asking when the building would be open. I told them I had no idea.

The courthouse is now strictly off limits, closed to the general public, to the press, and even, in the company of a reporter, to its architect. Waite arrived, and the best we could do was take a walk around the outside. "If there's one building that really encapsulates the history of New York during the second half of the nineteenth century, when the city became the capital of the world, it's this one," he told me. "Tweed liked fine things." As we circled the block, Waite pointed out how the original ruddy-hued marble from Tuckahoe had weathered and could be distinguished from the paler, Massachusetts stones.

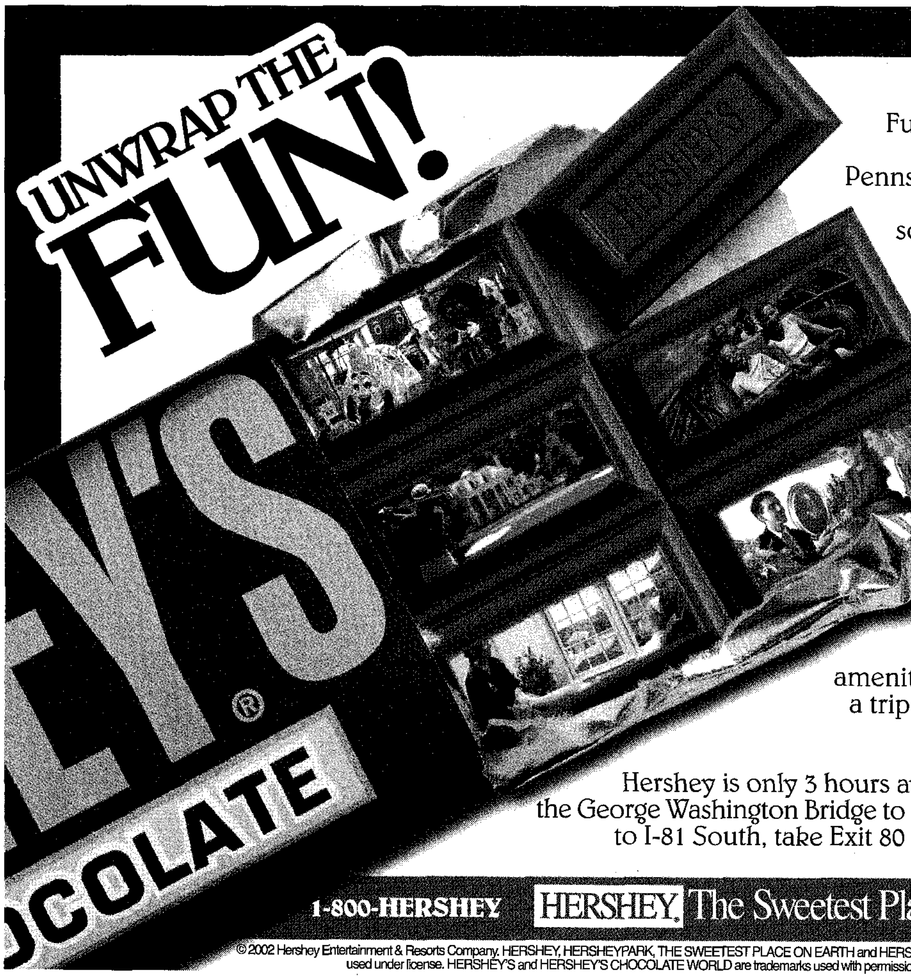
Thanks to its associations, the Tweed was neglected and unloved almost from the moment it was completed. For half a century, it served as a county court; then it was converted into a city court and then a family court. Eventually, many of its soaring chambers were partitioned into offices for use by second-tier city agencies. The building's polychrome brick was painted gray, its entry foyer walled off to make space for rest rooms, and its intricately molded cast-iron steps encased in concrete. In 1974, a task force appointed by Mayor Abe Beame described the Tweed as "one million cubic feet of unusable space" and recommended that it be demolished. Architecturally speaking, neglect may have been the best thing for the building. "It's all intact, because everyone was afraid to spend any money on it," Waite observed.

When the city began work on the renovation, it had only the sketchiest idea of what the building might be used for. This was either idealism or folly, or both. There was still no firm plan midway through the project, even after *Newsday*, invoking Tweed, reported on how much the work was costing. Finally, the Giuliani administration hired an architectural consultant to study the matter, at a cost of a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The consultant considered everything from high-end condos to a boutique hotel before concluding that only a museum made sense for the building, both because of its splendor and because so much public money was going into restoring it. Not long afterward, Giuliani offered the Tweed to the Museum of the City of New York.

The museum's board of directors was attracted by the idea of being given, gratis, a fine new home for its collections of antique toys and silverware. But it turned out that the board didn't want quite the same building that the city was working on. The Tweed has enormous windows, which the city had had refurbished at a substantial cost; from the museum's perspective, these windows let in too much light. A ventilation system for a restaurant had been installed on the east side of the building, but the museum's consultants wanted to put the restaurant on the west side. Even as the city was ordering high-tech glass panels for the doors etched with beavers and Indian braves, the museum's architects were drawing up plans to have the doorways modified. The Giuliani administration agreed to a second round of renovations—much of it aimed at undoing the work of the first—and, what's more, agreed to foot half the bill. The remodelling was expected to take two years and to cost more than forty million dollars.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg held his inaugural party in the Tweed, but he made it clear early on that he was not entirely happy with the deal Giuliani had struck. His objections—at least the ones that he voiced—ranged from the effects of the museum's move on its current uptown neighbors to technical concerns about the Tweed's landmark status. Then suddenly, in March, while talking to a group of schoolchildren from Staten Island, he scuttled the museum plan in favor of a brand-new one that seemed entirely of his own devising. Instead of bestowing the building on the Museum of the City of New York, or any other museum, he announced his intention to turn it back into city offices. He said he wanted to move several hundred of the city's school administrators into the top floors of the Tweed and turn the ground level into a demonstration school. The justification he offered for the move was that, since the courthouse is so close to City Hall, it would show his commitment to education. "Symbolism is important," he told the children.

Even many members of Bloomberg's



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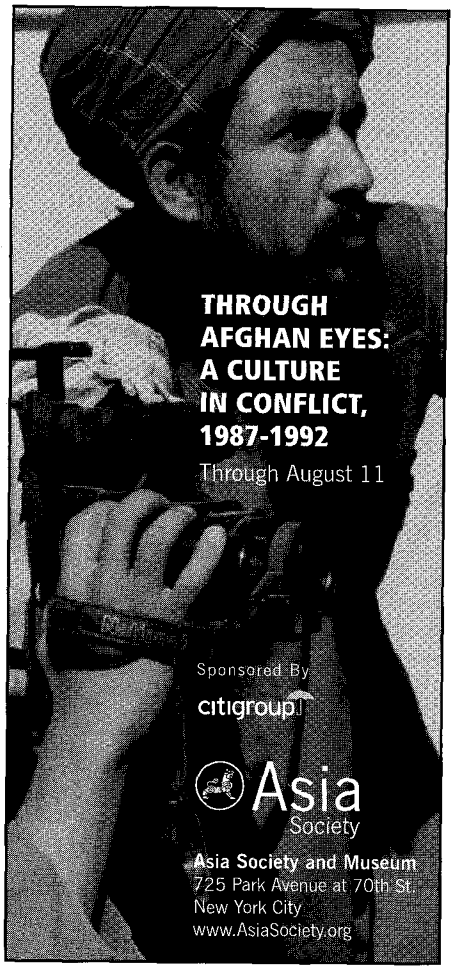
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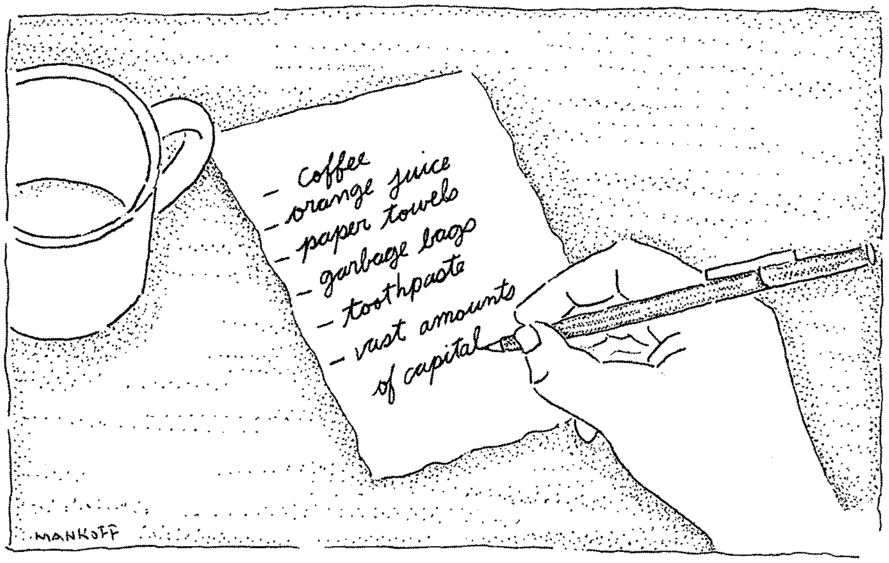
own staff seemed taken aback, and reaction to the plan in the rest of the city ran from outrage to disbelief. "Ludicrous" was the assessment of John Dyson, the former deputy mayor who had overseen the renovation. One city official covered his face with his hands when I asked about Bloomberg's idea. "I can't even talk about it," he said. "My feelings are too strong."

The nature of municipal government is such that it is possible that Bloomberg will have his way, but unlikely. Location aside, there is nothing about the Tweed that suits it to the use the Mayor has in mind. To accommodate a school full of children, not to mention hundreds of bureaucrats, much of the renovation would have to be gutted, again at considerable expense. In the meantime, the courthouse just sits there—magnificent, but empty—guarded at a cost of fifteen thousand dollars a month.

Ultimately, Tweed's masterwork proved to be his undoing. On July 22, 1871, the *Times* ran a front-page story headlined "THE SECRET ACCOUNTS," with the subhead "Proofs of Undoubted Frauds Brought to Light." In it, the paper provided what it claimed was incontrovertible evidence of the Boss's swindles. (One of the *Times'* sources is believed to have been a young man named James O'Brien, who worked his way into the Tweed ring's favor by serving as a trustee of the Tweed Testimonial Association.) In the weeks that followed, one account after another related in monstrous detail—$404,347.72 spent on safes, $565,713.34 on carpets—the extent of the thievery. An often repeated story from the period is that one of Tweed's cronies, Richard (Slippery Dick) Connolly, the city comptroller, tried to buy the *Times* off—in one version offering five hundred thousand dollars, in another five million. "I don't think that the devil will ever make a higher bid for me," the paper's publisher, George Jones, is said to have replied. That November, Tweed still managed to get reëlected to the State Senate, but in December he was indicted.

From that point on, Tweed suffered a rapid, if colorful, descent. The first of his trials, which took place in his own, half-finished courthouse, ended in a hung jury, amid rumors, never substantiated, that the jurors had been bribed. At his second trial, Tweed was convicted on two hundred and four counts of auditing failures. (Before heading off to a cell in the Tombs, he is reported to have had dinner sent over from Delmonico's.) Tweed appealed his sentence, and nineteen months later he was released, only to be hastily rearrested on different charges. Bail was set at three million dollars, a sum that even Tweed's friends couldn't muster. His incarceration was lightened, in the quaint fashion of the time, by frequent trips home for dinner. On one such jaunt, Tweed went upstairs and never came back down. Six months later, he was sighted in Cuba. A few months after that, he was arrested in Spain, where he was discovered posing as a seaman. Tweed had supposedly been recognized on the basis of a Thomas Nast cartoon.



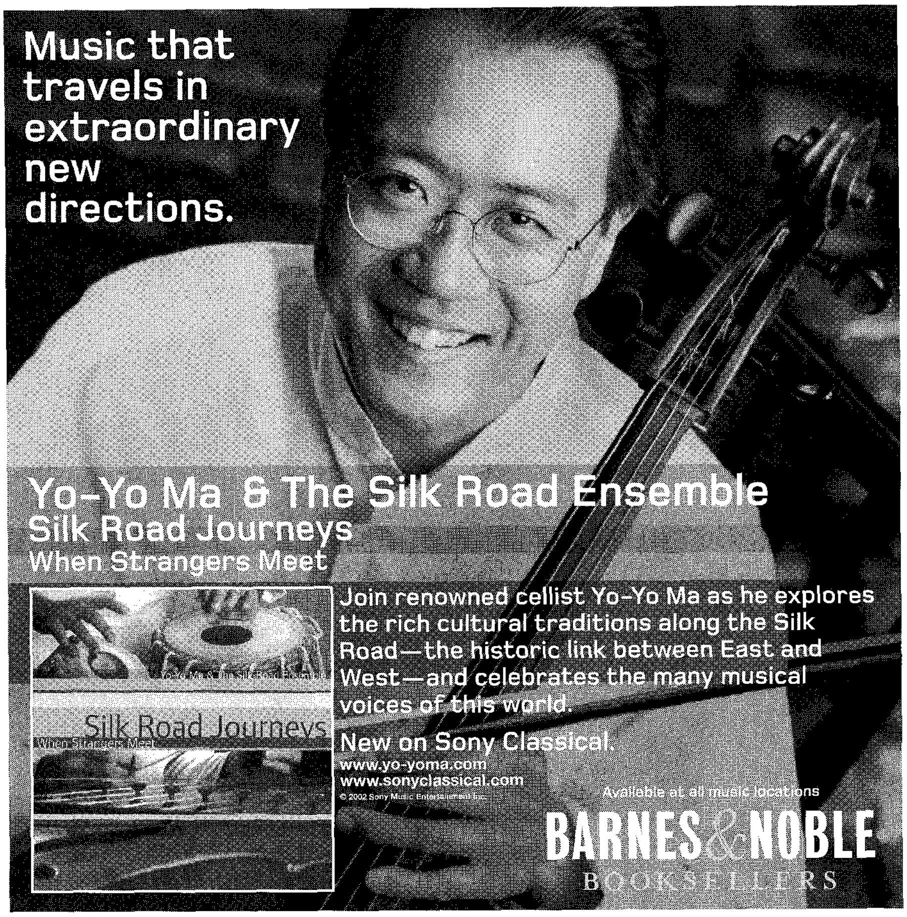
Initially, Tweed's ruin was heralded as a victory for the cause of reform. Among the celebratory verses written at the time was a poem, "The House That Tweed Built," which cheerfully proclaimed:

> Let us hope
> The Boss and his gang will have plenty
> of rope
> Till they swing,
> The whole Ring,
> To Sing-Sing.

Samuel Tilden, a lawyer who took much of the credit for pursuing Tweed, became, on the basis of that pursuit, governor of New York, and almost, in an Al Gore sort of way, President of the United States.

But the reformers' achievement soon proved to be a hollow one. The Tweed ring had been a huge operation, involving, among many others, the mayor, "Elegant" Oakey Hall; the president of the Department of Public Parks, Peter (Brains) Sweeny; and Slippery Dick Connolly. Some of the members fled after the ring was exposed, some made partial restitution, and many more continued on in government service. When Tweed, suffering from heart trouble and diabetes, finally realized that there was no other hope, he approached the state attorney general, offering to provide a full account of his misdeeds, and to hand over all his property, in return for his release. Tweed wrote out his confession, even providing checks from various associates as evidence, only to have the attorney general reject the offer. The problem was not, as Alexander B. Callow, Jr., points out, that Tweed had provided too little evidence but that he had provided too much. Implicated in his various schemes was half of official New York. "Could even Mr. Tilden afford to have Tweed's story told?" the *Times* wondered.

Tweed spent the last months of his life in the Ludlow Street jail, on the Lower East Side, which he had, in his official capacity, also helped to build, in a room where he kept a piano and a servant. Ill and disheartened, he was down to a hundred and sixty pounds. On April 12, 1878, his daughter came to visit and stepped out to fetch her father some ice cream. Tweed died while she was gone. He was fifty-five. His last words are reported to have been "I hope they will be satisfied, now they have got me." ♦



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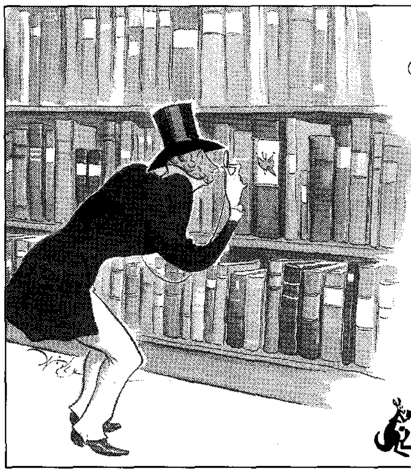

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LETTER FROM JERUSALEM

RAGE AND REASON

Will anyone listen to the P.L.O.'s voice of restraint?

BY DAVID REMNICK

Sari Nusseibeh, the Palestine Liberation Organization's chief representative in Jerusalem, is perhaps the most moderate adviser in the councils of Yasir Arafat. (He is no doubt the only one to have worked on a kibbutz or to have written a graduate-school essay at Harvard on Wittgenstein and the role of jokes in philosophical discourse.) On many issues of moment within the Palestinian hierarchy—the morality of suicide bombings, the wisdom of Arafat's rejection of the Israeli offers at Camp David and at Taba, the refugees' demand for the "right of return" to historical Palestine—Nusseibeh disagrees, publicly and in all languages, with the hard men of the P.L.O. and Hamas, and even with Arafat (to the extent that Arafat reveals himself). To him, "martyr operations" are blatantly "immoral," the flat rejection of the Israeli proposals a "major missed opportunity," and the right of return a painful delusion best forgotten. It is not obvious why Arafat, who craves the support and supposed authenticity of the maximalists of Hamas

and Islamic Jihad, appointed a mild man in corduroy and tweed to run the East Jerusalem portfolio. As a scholar and as the scion of a distinguished family, Nusseibeh wields about as much street credibility in the refugee camps of Nablus as a duke among the sansculottes. He has no muscle to offer Arafat, no immediate value, except, perhaps, as an ornament of democracy where democracy hardly exists. There is no argument to be made for Nusseibeh's power—unless one happens to believe in the power of restraint and rational thought.

Nusseibeh is fifty-three years old. He was born in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem. His forebears came to the city in the seventh century, with Caliph Omar. For centuries, the Nusseibehs have been involved in public affairs. Sari's grandfather was a top city official under the pre-1948 British Mandate, and Sari's father, Anwar, was, at various points in his career, a Palestinian warrior, the Jordanian minister of defense, the governor of Jerusalem, and Amman's Ambassador to the Court of St. James's. (His mother, Nuzha, was from a wealthy family in Ramle, a town between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv; they became refugees in 1948, losing their house and all their belongings, and resettling in Cairo and Jerusalem.) The signs of a Nusseibeh dynasty are abundant. For the past five hundred years, the family has been charged with holding the keys to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City, which many Christians believe is the site of the Crucifixion. When it was time for Sari to send his eldest son, Jamal, to school, he sent him to Eton. As a boy, Jamal had

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GILLES PERESS

Mourners outside a hospital after the Israeli attack on the West Bank city of Jenin, where the fighting lasted for more than a week.

participated in the first intifada—an uprising that was outlined in a Fatah paper called "The Jerusalem Document." The principal author of "The Jerusalem Document" was Sari Nusseibeh.

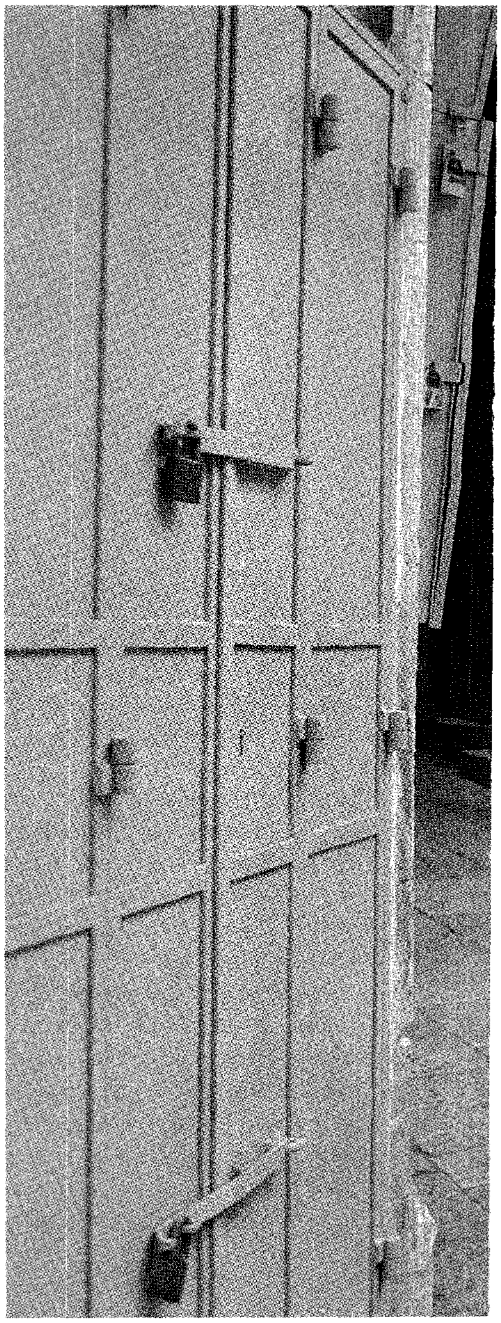
Nusseibeh came to politics obliquely, without a sense of calling. In 1968, just a year after Israel won the Six-Day War and took possession of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem—as well as gaining dominion over more than a million Palestinians—he was far away, reading philosophy at Christ Church, the most socially radiant of the Oxford colleges. (After university, Sari married Lucy Austin, the daughter of J. L. Austin, an Oxford don who wrote "How to Do Things with Words" and helped found the "ordinary language" school. They have four children.) Nearly every morning at eleven, Sari walked to the St. Aldates Church coffee house to meet with a young Israeli scholar from Queen's College named Avishai Margalit. "We talked politics in a sort of analytic way," Margalit, who now teaches philosophy in Jerusalem, told me. "There was no preaching to the other. It was melancholic talk, with me knowing that Israel was triumphalist and intoxicated after the war and him knowing that the Palestinians were in disarray. Sari was a sort of aristocratic kid, beautifully groomed and with great charm." Anwar Nusseibeh, who had been badly wounded in the war of 1948, sensed in his son a decidedly more pacific and private temperament. Margalit recalled, "His father said to me, 'I wanted to keep Sari outside of it because he would end up in trouble.'" As it happened, trouble could not be avoided.

After completing a Ph.D. in medieval Islamic philosophy at Harvard, in 1978, Nusseibeh began teaching at Bir Zeit University, in the West Bank, a center for both higher learning and elementary politics. At first, Nusseibeh kept out of public life, concentrating instead on problems of logic and moral philosophy; but eventually he was dragooned into academic politics—union issues and the like—and then into Palestinian politics generally. Nusseibeh was not mild in his opinions about the occupation. He demanded that the Palestinians in the occupied territories either be annexed as equal citizens of Israel (with the knowledge that in such an arrangement Arabs would eventually become a majority, ending the Jewish state) or, the more likely prospect, be made citizens of a new country, adjacent to Israel, called Palestine. And yet in the early eighties Nusseibeh outraged many of his fellow faculty members, and members of Arafat's Fatah organization, by attending a conference at Harvard to meet with Israeli politicians. As Palestinian politics grew more radical, Nusseibeh insisted on a rhetoric of moderation and on contact with the putative enemy. During the first intifada, he was quoted in the *International Herald Tribune* as saying, "I think it is a kind of exorcism to throw a stone at Satan," but he threw no stones himself and pressed for a "generally nonviolent" uprising. To call for the elimination of Israel, he argued publicly, was irrational; the Jews, he said, had a deep historical connection to Jerusalem just as the Arabs did. This was not, in all circles, a popular argument. One morning, on the Bir Zeit campus, several masked members of a Jordan-based branch of Fatah jumped Nusseibeh. He was badly beaten and one of his arms was broken.

Nusseibeh summoned up that day with a wry smile. "I remember it well," he said to me. "I'd just finished delivering a lecture at the university on liberalism and tolerance."

A few weeks ago, I met Nusseibeh at the Damascus Gate, one of the gates leading into the Old City of Jerusalem. Israeli troops and tanks were still in cities throughout the West Bank, and Colin Powell had been dispatched to the region, travelling everywhere and, it appeared, getting nowhere.

Nusseibeh sat on a stone step under a midday sun. He was in the company of a few dozen other Palestinians, and they were chanting slogans directed against Ariel Sharon and calling for his rapid demise. It was not an especially impressive demonstration, and Nusseibeh did not make for an impressive firebrand. He wore a slouchy baseball cap and a houndstooth jacket, and his expression, as he held up a hand-lettered anti-occupation placard and joined in the chanting, was sheepish. Over the years, he has repeatedly told friends that he would just as soon live a quiet academic life, one of teaching and contemplation and sabbaticals abroad—"Just like Avishai's life!"—and to see him now, hot and uncomfortable, was to take him at his word. He seemed both unhappy and out of place. And yet Nusseibeh is capable of absorbing every variety of political menace: anonymous telephone calls, hate mail, death threats. Even more unusual for someone in public life, he does not seem to mind being called irrelevant, as he often is. In January, when he declared that the Palestinians would be best served by the creation of a demilitarized state, Israel's environment minister, Tzahi Hanegbi, waved him off as an "esoteric character," and the minister of public security, Uzi Landau, warned that Nus-



Sari Nusseibeh (left), the P.L.O.'s chief representativ seibeh was trying to pull off some kind of "trick." Landau refers to Nusseibeh as "the pretty face of terrorism."

This was not the first time that Nusseibeh had been so accused. In 1991, during the Gulf War, he was jailed after Israeli military-intelligence officials said he had called the Iraqi Ambassador to Tunisia and described how better to target the Scud missiles that Baghdad was lobbing at Israel. After three months, Nusseibeh was released. He says that the charge that he helped Iraq in any way was "absurd," and that the Israelis had been tapping his telephone, collecting a file, and hoping to "nail" him since the 1987 intifada. In fact, such charges still come up. Recently, an article in the Jerusalem *Post* warned that Nusseibeh is a "con man," who plays the "good cop" in a media dumb show "orchestrated by Arafat." Nevertheless, leading politicians, including Israel's foreign minister, Shimon Peres, and its defense minister, Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, who are not in the habit of endorsing enemies of the state, have praised Nusseibeh as a courageous and trustworthy interlocutor.

Arafat clearly understands Nusseibeh's value. Until last year, Arafat's representative in Jerusalem had been another of the city's Palestinian dynasts, Faisal Husseini, and when Husseini died, of a heart attack, while travelling in Kuwait, Arafat turned to Nusseibeh. For months, Nusseibeh resisted, worrying that he would be a for-display-only appointment. More important, he thought that the second intifada, which followed Arafat's rejection of Israeli proposals for a final settlement and Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in September, 2000, was not an effective uprising—"not really an intifada at all" but, rather, a series of terrible mistakes and improvisations that would lead to radicalization on the Palestinian side, a strengthening of the right wing on the Israeli side, and, above all, the

East Jerusalem, says, "People are so desperate, so crazy, so resentful, that it is natural to expect more of this."

bloody dissolution of trust on both sides. Nusseibeh finally took the job, but his forecast proved all too accurate.

After the demonstration, we drove to his office at Al-Quds, a university with six thousand students in East Jerusalem, where he is the president. Nusseibeh has bushy, graying hair and wears wire-rimmed glasses. In a frantic political realm, he moves laconically, thoughtfully. He slumped into a Naugahyde armchair and tried to cool off and smoke at the same time. An assistant came around with coffee. As Nusseibeh's attention alternated among the coffee, his cigarette, and a set of blue worry beads, he managed to describe the current disaster "through our prism," as if this were a kind of tutorial.

"The escalation has an internal objective dynamic," he began, blowing smoke to the ceiling. "Things moved from one stage to the next in a kind of inevitable way, leading to the point where people felt they had no way to react other than . . . this."

"This," of course, was a catchall category of violence, including so-called targeted assassinations, bus bombings, bat-mitzvah shootings, arrests, strip searches, bulldozers, stones, F-16s, Kalashnikovs, helicopter gunships, and, on March 27th, the Passover bombing at the Park Hotel in Netanya that left twenty-eight people dead, and Sharon's armored incursions into nearly every major city in the West Bank.

"A lot of this is Sharon's fault," Nusseibeh said. "He knew just how to elicit the kinds of reactions from us that would then be a justification for going one step further."

After fending off a few calls on his cell phone, Nusseibeh continued, "I look at it this way: before Camp David, when the Oslo accords were first signed, people assumed, and were told by their leaders, that this was a first step, and at the end of five years we were going to regain the territories occupied since 1967 and establish a state with East Jerusalem as its capital. So people went along with Arafat and this process. There were several positive steps taken. On the other hand, the Palestinians saw the Israelis doing things that were not consistent with withdrawal. They saw them continuing to confiscate territory and increase settlements. So they began to develop a kind of schizophrenia. If you were living in a place like Nablus or Jenin and were told by your leadership that things were going ahead and you heard about negotiators coming and going, you assumed it would happen. But, if you looked outside, you saw the opposite on your doorstep: territories being confiscated, settlements, lack of freedom of movement. And things were getting postponed—five years went to almost seven—so there was a sense of frustration among the population.

THE LIGHT

After you leave the office
I turn off the overhead so the secretary
will think I've left.
I sit looking at the white paper on my graying desk
and recall being an adolescent
in the same light: not
being able to move into the world
that wants you to do everything
the way it wants. The backstroke.
Touch-typing.
Cutting a dress from a pattern.
An A-line. Cotton.
A pink daisy print
spread smooth on the Home Ec. table,
pins between my lips.
Later hemmed at home. This was when
we had to wear dresses to school.
This was when I knew I would marry one day
but first have my own office.
This office is light, or dark really,
the way my room was always dark
so I could avoid being the daughter
in the rooms with lamps.
How I wish you would turn your car
away from your wife and child
and return to this square of dark light
so familiar, as I've already said,
it fails to pulse with grief.

—*Kimiko Hahn*

"When they went to Camp David and Arafat said afterward that we didn't get what we thought we should, people in the territories felt that their suspicions about Israel were vindicated. From the Palestinians' perspective, Barak did not come as far as they thought he should. So Arafat came out of Camp David feeling angry with Barak, and Barak, because he didn't get a proper or positive response and felt he went out on a limb, felt betrayed by Arafat and the entire P.L.O. leadership. And Clinton, who wanted his Nobel Peace Prize, and wanted it to be done in ten days, also walked out feeling angry."

The biggest problem, as Nusseibeh sees it, is that neither side contained its anger, and so "the system of discussion was blown to smithereens." Each side indulged its worst suspicions about the other: an increasing number of Israelis felt that Arafat had been unmasked as a messianic terrorist who had never really wanted compromise except, perhaps, as a tactic; the Palestinians felt confirmed in their suspicion that Israel had no intention of giving up the settlements or their general dominance. According to Palestinians, Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount, the most disputed of all pieces of land, was the spark that set off the "cycle of armed violence." According to

Israelis, the uprising had been planned months before.

As the violence accelerated, Arafat recognized that the leaders of Hamas and other Islamic radicals, with their calls for armed insurrection and the elimination of Israel from the map, were growing steadily more popular, while his own team, especially its members who were tied to the Oslo process, was seen as passé. And so Arafat began to encourage some of his younger lieutenants, including Marwan Barghouti and Jibril Rajoub, in the West Bank, and Muhammad Dahlan, in Gaza, to use the weaponry of the Palestinian police and security forces to create, in essence, a civilian army that could compete with Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Arafat's Fatah organization now sponsored the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, which was soon claiming responsibility for more suicide-bombing attacks in Israel than even Hamas.

Nusseibeh, however, denies that the Palestinians were so calculating or so organized. "On the whole, the Palestinian reaction to the Israelis was basically haphazard, emotional, out of anger," he said. "Israeli action toward the Palestinians was very determined, planned, and cold-blooded. This is why I thought from the beginning that a strategy was being worked out to provoke the Palestinians and draw them into a battle of which they are not the masters—namely, of violent confrontation. The goal is the destruction of the Oslo process and the Palestinian Authority, to be followed by the implementation of a Sharonian regime of what peace should look like for the Palestinians. Which is basically to give the Palestinians something that they can call a state, maybe something like forty per cent of the West Bank and Gaza, but under total security scrutiny by Israel." He added, "The good thing about Sharon is that he is a very systematic and straightforward thinker, and determined. He tells you what he wants to do and does it. Sharon has a vision."

In his narrative, Nusseibeh negotiated between history and apologia. He would not, for instance, argue that Arafat is innocent of incitement to violence. But he hints around the edges; he is brave but not a fool.

"Certainly Arafat is not a Gandhi," he said, with just a trace of a smile. "He is not someone who believes only in nonviolent action. He believes in the usefulness, the utility, of force."

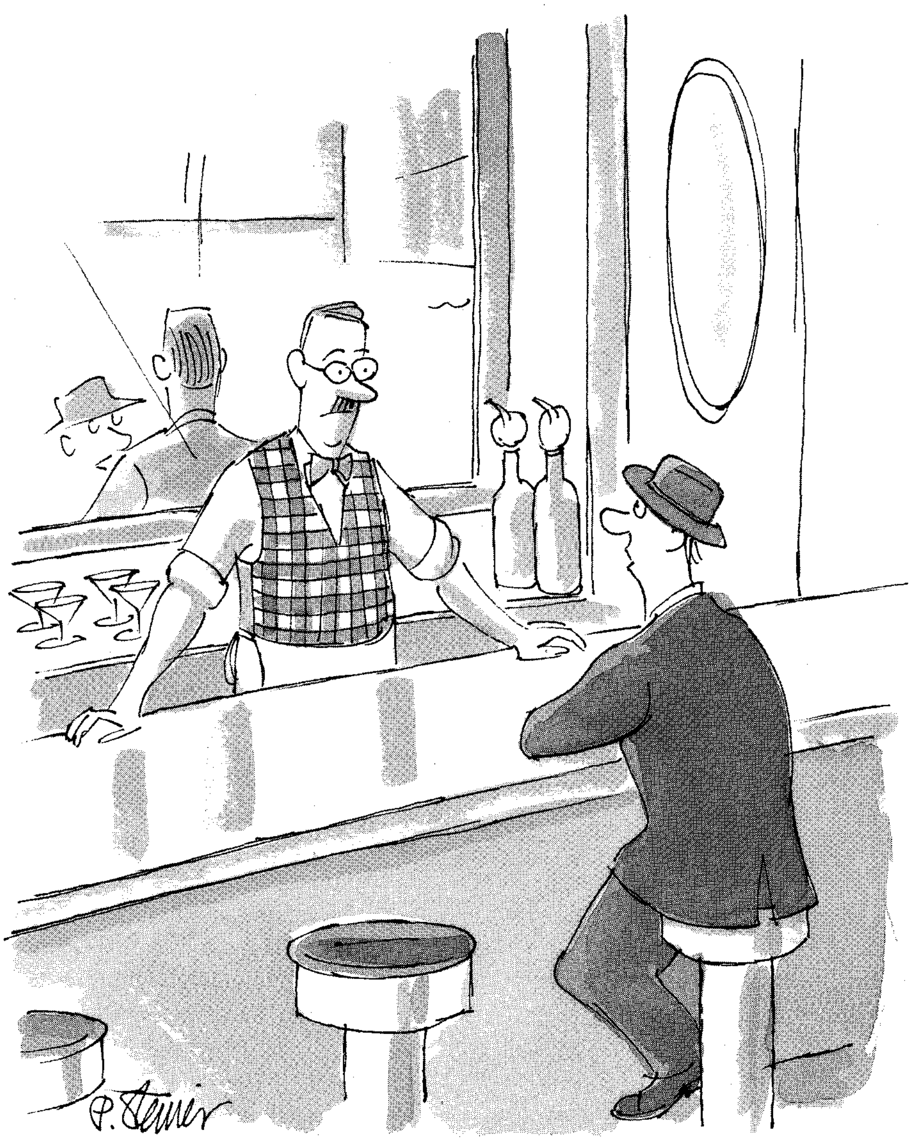
Nusseibeh got another telephone call, this time from his wife, Lucy, telling him to come home. Their daughter had hurt her neck at a basketball game. Nothing too serious, but she was in the hospital.

"Sorry," he said. "We'll meet later."

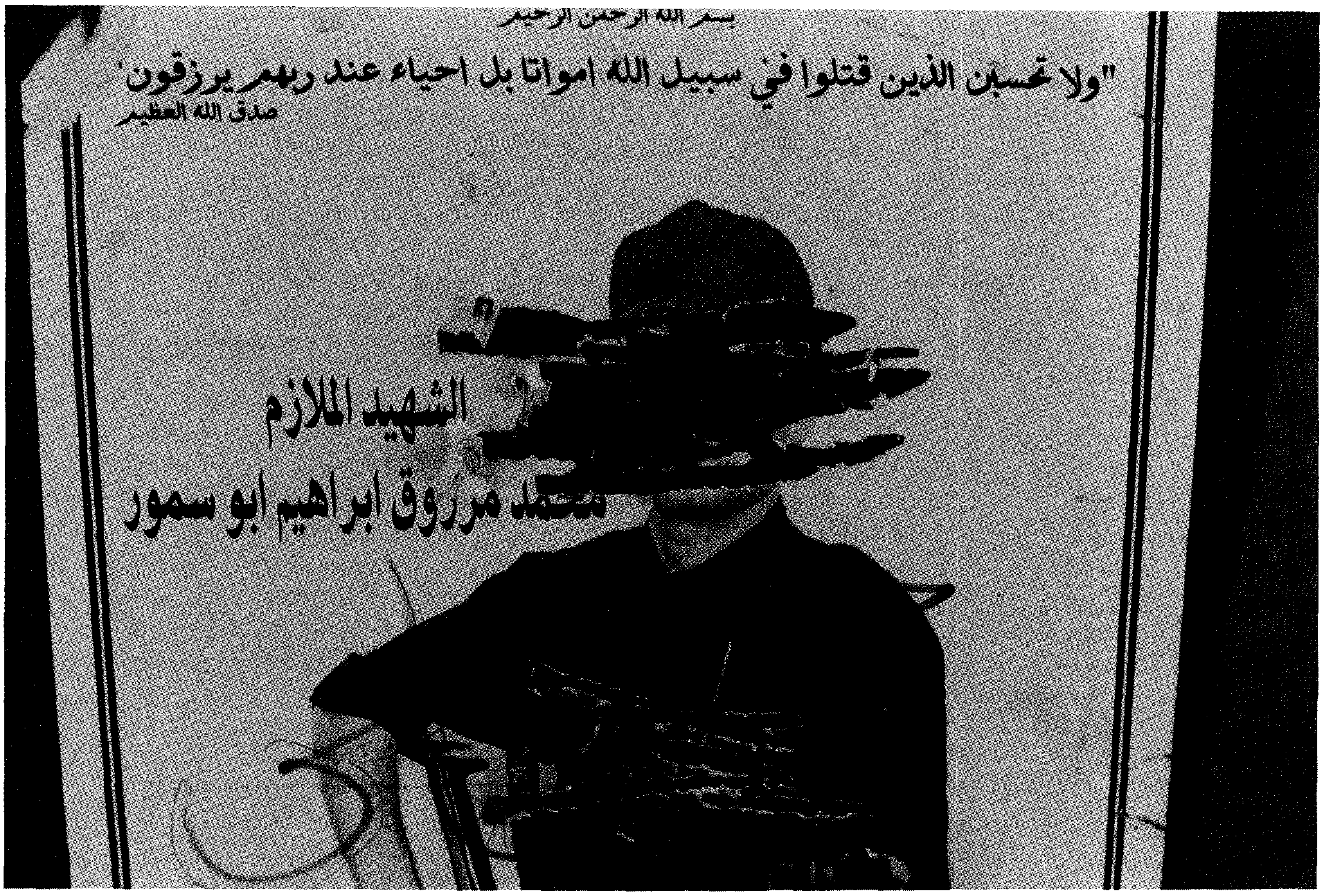
He left, with his bodyguards, and rode home in the back seat of his S.U.V.

A few minutes later, when I was back at my hotel in West Jerusalem, the sirens began.

Then the phone: an Israeli friend who writes for the daily *Ha'aretz* said he'd heard that there had been a suicide bombing at the Mahane Yehuda market in the midst of the pre-Sabbath shopping rush. Within five minutes, I was there, to witness the aftermath of an event that has taken place so many times: yet again, a young Palestinian wrapped with explosives had got as close as possible to as many Israelis as possible and pushed a button. It was a woman this time, twenty years old, Andaleeb Taqtaqah, from a small town near Bethlehem. A police spokesman said that the woman had tried to make it into the market, where scores of poorer shoppers were taking advantage of the last, closing discounts before dusk and the beginning of the Sabbath. Apparently, when she saw that the entrance was well guarded, she turned toward the bus stop nearby. Then she did what her masters in the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades had trained her to do. Six dead, eighty wounded. A human head rolled down the street, we were told. Religious men trained to work at such sites



"I can't decide between a little umbrella and an olive on a sword."


بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
"ولا تحسبن الذين قتلوا في سبيل الله امواتا بل احياء عند ربهم يرزقون"
صدق الله العظيم
الشهيد الملازم
محمد مرزوق ابراهيم ابو سمور

A defaced poster in Bethlehem commemorating the "martyrdom" of a suicide bomber.

put on sterile bodysuits and went around picking up body parts and scraps of flesh and putting them in garbage bags.

The wave of suicide bombings in Israel has steadily undermined the assumptions and the habits of everyday life. In Jerusalem, there are guards at the door of nearly every restaurant and café. People make all kinds of fine calculations. They try to sit at the back of public rooms or buses, the better to avoid the blast from a nervous bomber coming through the door. Parents of two children will send them to school on separate buses.

Many Palestinian leaders endorse suicide bombing as the answer to Israel's F-16s and Apache helicopters; the rest, the moderates, attempt to explain, if not justify, the phenomenon in terms of the frustrated hopes and the pressure of everyday life under Israeli occupation—never mind that the bombings began not at a time of despair but, rather, in the mid-nineties, when Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, the initiators of the Oslo process, were in office. One prominent Palestinian spokesman, Ghassan Khatib, the director of the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center, told me that the occupation, with its checkpoints and its violence, "accumulates a feeling of bitterness and creates a spirit of revenge, a feeling of anger, and brings reaction in a way that people feel is the only way they can respond. In Ramallah, not long before these suicide activities, an Israeli tank shell killed a mother and five children. The Israelis said they were aiming at Palestinian policemen and mistakenly hit the civilians. You might believe them. I might believe them. But the perception of the public is what comes out of it."

In traditional Islamic theology, suicide is anathema. The Koran says that those who commit suicide are doomed to eternal damnation, forever repeating the act. There have been suicide attacks in the region, however, since the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when the Persian leader Hasan ibn al-Sabah led a group called the Assassins on raids of rival fortresses. The Islamic revolution in Iran ushered in the modern version. Now Iran supports Hezbollah in Lebanon and Islamic militants in the occupied territories and ships arms to Arafat. Recently, at the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Sheikh Abdul-Rahman al-Sudais gave a sermon, broadcast live, in which he prayed to Allah to "terminate" Jews, "the scum of humanity, the rats of the world, prophet killers, pigs, and monkeys." Suha al-Taweel Arafat, Yasir Arafat's wife, was quoted by *Al-Majalla*, a London-based weekly, as saying that if she had a son there would be "no greater honor" than to sacrifice him for the Palestinian cause: "Would you expect me and my children to be less patriotic and more eager to live than my countrymen and their father and leader who is seeking martyrdom?"

Leaders throughout the Palestinian movement have become emboldened by the lurid notion of liberation via a prolonged campaign of teen-agers blowing up themselves and Israelis in restaurants and buses. What they see is that a suicide bombing, like no tactic before it, works; it is the ultimate terror act. Israelis go about their lives, but at the same time they are, in the profoundest sense, terrified.

That evening, when I went back to Al-Quds and met with Nusseibeh again, he told me he had learned of the bombing when the doctors at Hadassah Hospital, where his daughter was being treated for her neck injury, cleared out the emer-

At the Park Hotel in Netanya, after the Passover bombing that left twenty-eight people dead.

gency room in anticipation of the wounded who would surely come from the Mahane Yehuda market.

Nusseibeh was born a Muslim, but he is not a practicing one, he said. He does not believe, for example, in a real afterlife, for martyrs or anyone else. And yet when I asked him about suicide bombers he slowed down the rate of his conversation, as if he were being careful not to make a mistake. In front of whom—the authorities of religion or the P.L.O.—it was hard to tell.

"Personally, I don't think that one should be afraid of death, nor should one be excessively in love with life," he said. "But that's another thing. A person, in my mind, who brings death to himself and who causes, in the meantime, death to innocent civilians, is not a martyr."

"What is he?"

"I think he has a problem, psychologically," Nusseibeh said.

"Is he a murderer?" I asked.

"I don't know that I would call him a murderer as such," he said. "A murderer is someone, perhaps, who seeks out a specific person and, in a premeditated way, goes off and kills him. In this case, if you just go and kill a group of people of whom you have no knowledge, it's more than a murderer. I don't know what . . ."

I asked Nusseibeh if Baruch Goldstein, a settler from Brooklyn who gunned down twenty-nine Arabs at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron in 1994, was a murderer.

Nusseibeh leaned back in his desk chair and propped his feet up on a window ledge. He took a long drag on his cigarette.

"Again, I wouldn't call him a murderer in that sense," he said. "I would call his act a terrorist act. I would call a suicide bomber's attack a terrorist attack. People killed in a terrorist attack are murdered. But I don't know if the person himself would be called a murderer. A killer? Hmm. I don't really know."

"This is a terrible semantic game, isn't it?" I said.

"It's not a game," he replied. "But, whatever it is, it's morally unjustified, by whatever name it goes by. . . . This is certainly abnormal, not normal, in a society that has this as a general state of mind."

Finally, I asked Nusseibeh if Arafat has ever expressed any reservations about the pervasive culture and celebration of martyrdom among the Palestinians.

"Uh, no," he said. "It's not just that he doesn't. In general, not many people do who are in a position of leadership. It's a social order, a social attitude, and people who partake of it are spread all over the community: the imams, the teachers, maybe mothers, and then, therefore, the kids. It's not Arafat. It's widespread, it's prevalent in society."

Jenin is a city of some thirty thousand in the northern region of the West Bank. It is known as a center for suicide bombers: a quarter of the bombers in this intifada so far have come from Jenin. Northern cities like Nablus, Tulkarm, and Jenin are generally poorer than central cities like Ramallah, and the politics there are more radical, the influence of Hamas and Islamic Jihad more pervasive. Iz al-Din al-Qassam, an Islamic preacher and a rebel against the Jews and the British in the thirties, was killed by British forces in a village near Jenin, and Hamas named its military wing after him. "For the Israelis he is a terrorist forefather and for the Palestinians he is the first martyr," Danny

משטרה
POLICE

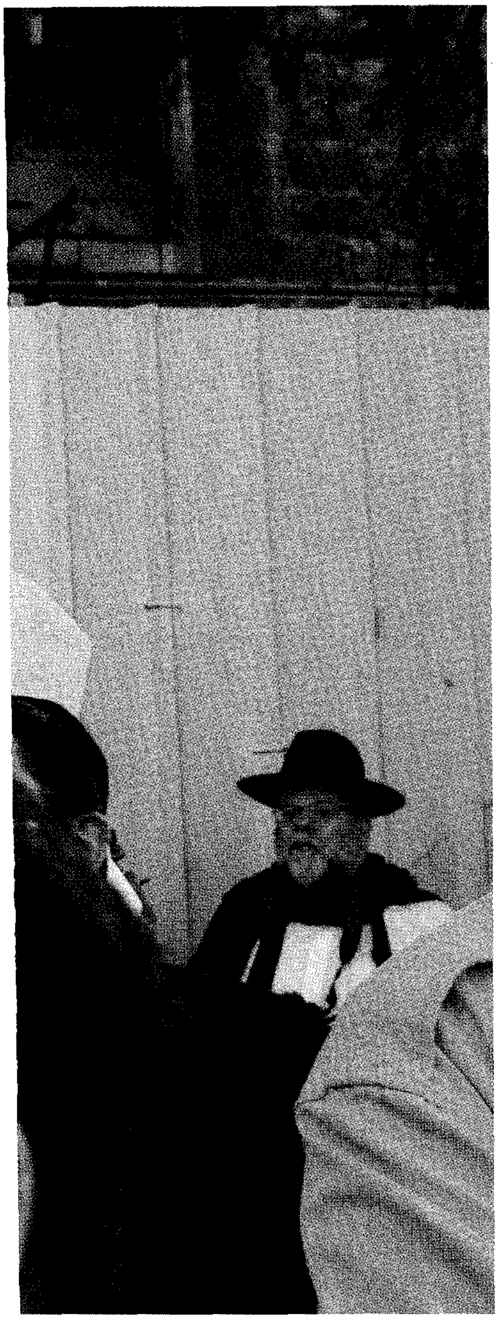
Onlookers outside the Mahane Yehuda market, in West Jerusalem, where a Palestinian woman exploded a suicide bomb during t

Rubinstein, a columnist for *Ha'aretz* who has been covering the Palestinians since 1968, told me. "He is a hero, like Jeanne d'Arc for the French."

Before the Passover bombing, the Israeli government had relied on targeted assassinations to go after the leaders of terrorist cells, using missiles, car bombs, exploding cell phones. Last year, Israeli security forces killed a leader of Islamic Jihad in the Jenin region at a booby-trapped public telephone. But now the operations in cities throughout the West Bank were less delicate and remote. On April 3rd, after encircling Jenin for several days and preparing reservists, Israeli Army officers ordered tanks, Cobra helicopters, and armored D-9 bulldozers into the city and its refugee camp.

Israeli Army officers said they expected that there would be some resistance, some shooting, as there had been elsewhere, especially in the refugee camp, but that it would soon subside at the sight of superior firepower. Instead, the Palestinian fighters in Jenin, firing rifles and setting off bomb traps from two- and three-story apartment buildings in the camp, held out for more than a week, and by the time the battle was over there were twenty-three Israeli soldiers dead. The number of Palestinian deaths remains in dispute; the Palestinians say there were hundreds, many of them civilians; the Israeli Army says the number was closer to fifty. The center of the refugee camp is, indisputably, a pulverized ruin.

When I first drove up to the outskirts of the city with some colleagues, the Israeli Army was not letting journalists in and had blocked the roads with checkpoints and tanks; far more important, it was turning away aid workers and ambulances. The Israelis claimed that there were still snipers and booby traps in the city, especially near the camp, and that they were concerned about safety, not public relations.



e-Sabbath shopping rush.

MAGNUM

In an attempt to get around the roadblocks and reach the city center, we spent an hour crisscrossing some fields before a tank pulled up next to us and wagged its cannon threateningly. This was unnerving. Then an Israeli reservist with wire-rimmed glasses and an ironic smile popped out of the hatch and ordered us to leave. We headed toward an outlying neighborhood of Jenin and knocked on the door of a tour guide in his thirties named Hassan al-Ahmad. Hassan told us what he knew of the assault on Jenin, describing it, as all the Palestinians we spoke with did, as a slaughter complete with executions and mass graves. Then someone asked him about the suicide bombings, twelve in March alone, which the Israelis said had led them to initiate what they called Operation Defensive Wall.

"Suicide bombers?" Hassan said.

His expression slackened, and he was quiet for a while. "Suicide bombers? You ask me? Honestly, I'll answer you. It's O.K. I don't think I ever thought it was O.K. before. But when I see this, and seventy-five per cent of the Israeli people support Sharon, well, what can we do against these tanks? I have lived in Germany, in Europe, but I can't live in my own home with any security. They can drink coffee at night in the cafés of Tel Aviv but I can't in my home?"

Hassan's wife, who had just served us drinks, nodded in agreement.

Hassan said that there were still Palestinians who were prepared for a settlement, two states for two peoples, but "there are a lot of people who don't see it that way, who don't want compromise. They think that the Turks were here for four hundred years, and they left. The English were here in 1917, and they left in 1948. What is Great Britain now? It belongs to the States. And you hear from Hamas and Islamic Jihad that we will fight until the Israelis are gone, too. Arafat still has respect, and Israel has a serious chance with him. He has respect because he has fought for the Palestinian people for forty years. You know who comes after him? Rantisi. Zahar." Both are leaders of Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

A little later, we went back to the car to try again to reach the center of Jenin. This time, we succeeded. We parked in a narrow, shot-up alleyway and slowly walked toward the marketplace. The façades of the storefronts and the houses were cratered by tank and machine-gun fire. Every house that was still standing was pitted and charred. The Israelis had imposed a curfew, and the few people who dared come out onto the streets led us into houses that had been either destroyed or thoroughly trashed by soldiers searching for weapons. The streets were muddy, chewed up by tank treads. A couple of dusty dogs trotted along and then stopped when they felt the vibrations from a tank. On every wall along the way there were posters of Palestinian martyrs; the most common was of Abu Ali Mustafa, once the head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the second-largest faction of the P.L.O., after Fatah, and a supporter of terror attacks. Mustafa was decapitated by an Israeli missile last August while he was reading papers at his desk in Ramallah. In retaliation, less than two months later, P.F.L.P. gunmen assassinated an Israeli Cabinet minister, Rehavam Ze'evi, outside his room in a Jerusalem hotel.

Another tank rumbled down the street about a hundred yards away. A middle-aged man called us into an alley and over to a huge pile of concrete slabs.

"This was my home," the man, whose name was Assam Fashafsha, told us. "When they came in here, they called all the people out of their homes. In Arabic, on loudspeakers, they said, 'If you don't come out of your houses now, we'll knock them down with you inside.' This was at nine in the morning on the first day. And the tanks came in and destroyed it." Two of his relatives, a nephew and a sister-in-law, were killed, he said, when their house was bulldozed.

The fighting in Jenin was far worse than in any other city. Israeli officers said that after thirteen soldiers died in a booby-trapped building their attack intensified. The Palestinians we talked to, and those who spoke to the many other reporters who managed to get into Jenin, talked of Israelis bulldozing houses without waiting for them to be evacuated, of wounded fighters and civilians left to die in the streets, of strip searches, of people handcuffed for days, twenty and thirty to a room. In a Jenin hospital, a teacher in his forties named Ali Sereh described how Israeli soldiers used him as a human shield, having him walk down the street knocking on doors and telling people to come out of their houses. At the fifth such house, a confused Israeli sniper from another platoon shot Sereh in the leg and he was left in the street.

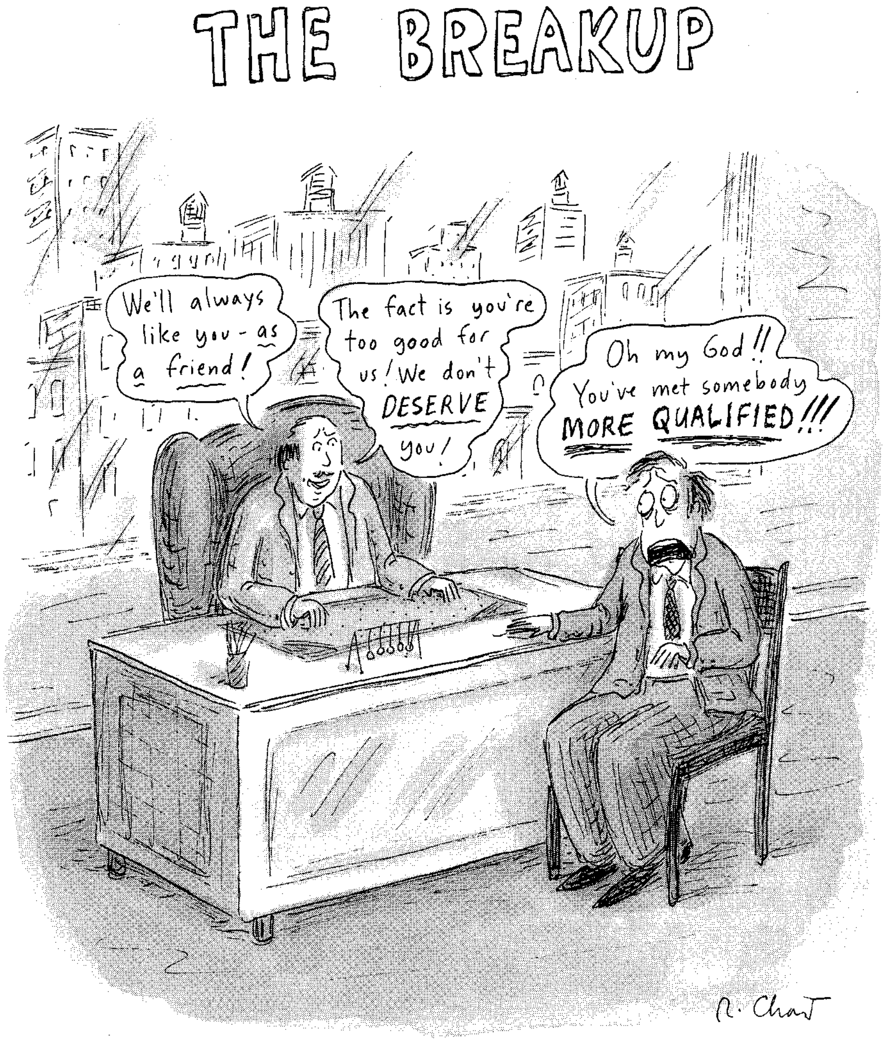
"I tried to ask for help, but the soldiers were unsympathetic," Sereh said. He said that someone from the neighborhood got to him, and he was passed from roof to roof, until, finally, he was delivered to the hospital.

The Israeli attack on Jenin has been heavily criticized by Amnesty International; there have even been suggestions that the Army committed war crimes. In Ramallah and Jerusalem, Palestinian spokesmen began to talk of another Srebrenica or Sabra and Shatila, charges that the Israelis dismissed as outrageous. The Israelis, in fact, said that it was the tactics of the Palestinian fighters that led to civilian deaths and the destruction of so many homes. If there was evidence of atrocities in Jenin, Guy Siri, the deputy director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, did not find it. "Everybody was thinking mass graves in the way we think of Kosovo," he told the Washington *Post*. "I don't think we have seen that." It remains now for the United Nations to investigate.

Even in late April, as the Israelis were pulling out of Jenin and the other cities of the West Bank, government officials were thinking about going in again. In an interview at the Israeli Army headquarters in Tel Aviv, a senior general involved in planning told me, "If Powell fails, then there will be more violence and more escalation. Then maybe we'll have to take even more aggressive actions against the Palestinian leadership. Maybe if we are forced to carry out other operations, we will enter and conquer all of the Palestinian areas and crush their infrastructure and stay there. Not that it's pleasant, but we might be forced to do it."

In Jerusalem, people were watching and reading reports not only on Jenin but on the anti-Israeli demonstrations abroad and, of course, synagogue bombings and desecrations in Europe and Tunisia. Among Israelis, the fear was not merely of more suicide bombers—no one believed that Sharon's operation would stop the bombings completely. The fear was of international isolation and, worse, a poisonous impasse with the Palestinians and a regional war.

I was reading the galley proofs of "Six Days of War," an excellent new history of the 1967 war by an Israeli diplomatic historian, Michael Oren, who had gained access to sources on all sides. We met at his office at the Shalem Center, a mainly conservative think tank in Jerusalem. Oren, who is in his mid-forties, was born in upstate New York and came to Israel when he was twenty-three. He fought in the Lebanon War in 1982, an experience that soured him for a while on Ariel Sharon; he and his fellow-soldiers in the special forces were furious that Sharon had led them to Beirut, far beyond their initial mission.


THE BREAKUP
We'll always like you - as a friend!
The fact is you're too good for us! We don't DESERVE you!
Oh my God!! You've met somebody MORE QUALIFIED!!!
R. Chast

At lunch, Oren said he thought that there was now, as there had been in 1967, a real chance of regional war against Israel, headed by Syria, Iran, and Iraq. "The dynamic of Palestinian leaders trying to drag the Arab states into a military conflict with Israel is recurring," he said. "You can close your eyes and it's 1967, but the idiom has changed from Arab nationalism to Islamic fundamentalism, to a great degree."

Oren's hopes for a solution are roughly in synch with Israeli public opinion. That is, he is "schizophrenic," the recurring word of the moment: he favors a Palestinian state with secure borders but, at the same time, supports Sharon's incursions as a necessary response to the "existential threat" that suicide bombers pose to Israeli society.

"Look, I am not sure that the Palestinian people know what they are about," Oren said at one point. "They have been offered a state so often: in 1937, they were offered a state, bigger than the Jewish state, by the Peel Commission, and they turned it down; they were offered partition in 1947 by the United Nations, and they turned it down; and then there was Camp David, and they turned that down. It raises the question, then, if a people cannot seize a historical opportunity, what kind of people are they? Instead, they are basing their identity on victimhood, and that feeds the suffering."

For Oren, and for many Israelis left, right, and center, Arafat revealed himself as untrustworthy after he ended the negotiations with the Israelis in 2000 without offering a counter-proposal, insisting, yet again, on the Jews' lack of a historical connection to the Western Wall and on the right of Palestinian refugees abroad to return to Israeli territory. Such a return, Oren said, "is a euphemism for not recognizing Israel's right to exist."

I mentioned Sari Nusseibeh and his

statement, deeply unpopular among his own people, that the Palestinians will have to give up the right of return and recognize Israel's right to a secure existence if there is ever going to be a real peace.

Oren smiled indulgently, as so many Israelis and Palestinians do at the mention of Nusseibeh's name. "Sari is a wonderful guy," he said, "but how many divisions does he have?"

A lot of things vex the question of Israel and the Palestinians: religious passion, the inability of each side to recognize the other's pain or historical claims, the sheer smallness of the region, its intimacy. By car from the center of Jerusalem, it is fifteen minutes south to Bethlehem, ten minutes north to Ramallah, ten minutes east to Abu Dis. (Without counting the delays at military checkpoints, that is.) David Makovsky, the former executive editor of the Jerusalem *Post* and a diplomatic correspondent for *Ha'aretz*, told me, "What people have never understood is that the reason an Israeli-Palestinian settlement is so hard is that there is too much history and too little geography. When the Egyptians and the Israelis made peace, they suddenly had a hundred miles of desert between them. They signed a treaty and, for the most part, they never really saw each other again. The quality of relations after the treaty was a footnote, like a divorce. But with the Israelis and the Palestinians the quality of the relationship after they make a deal is at the core of everything, as with a marriage. And when the Israelis begin to think that what the Palestinians really intend is not land-for-peace but land-for-war, well, it doesn't bode well for the marriage."

And yet, in the current environment of resentment, someone like Sari Nusseibeh can work only at the margins. Recently, when Ehud Ya'ari, Israeli television's leading expert on Palestinian politics, was asked if Nusseibeh could succeed Arafat, he said, "The long answer is no."

"He is a prince with all the characteristics of a prince," Nahum Barnea, whose column in *Yediot Ahronot* is the most popular in Israel, said. "When it came to real struggle, he was not there. It's part of his grace. He will not come to a barricade, or get into a fight with police. He's a gentleman, but this is not a gentleman's war. This war is so far from any idea of gentlemen that it is unimaginable." What Nusseibeh represents is the persistence of the idea of compromise, a certain sympathy not only with his own people but with the Other. He, like certain Israelis, has the ability to think as critically about his brethren as about the Other. One of the tragic signs of what has happened since Arafat's decision to pursue an uprising instead of signing a pact with Ehud Barak is that a man like Nusseibeh is even less representative of his people than he used to be. To visit the neighborhoods of relatively pacific East Jerusalem, to say nothing of the enraged precincts of Gaza City and the West Bank, is to understand how thoroughly the "spirit of Oslo"—the spirit that allowed Nusseibeh to quit politics in 1993 and start thinking about a new and totally private academic life—has been destroyed.

"He's clean."

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One afternoon, I stopped in to see Nusseibeh again, and I mentioned to him that Abu Ala, a deputy of Arafat's who had done much of the negotiating for the Oslo agreement, had told Joshua Hammer, of *Newsweek*, that "there are a hundred thousand Palestinians willing to become kamikazes."

Nusseibeh was once again smoking and working his worry beads. He seemed genuinely cast down by the comment; this was Arafat's ally, Abu Ala, not the head of Hamas.

Then he sighed and said, "It is possible you will have this. People are so desperate, so crazy, so resentful, that it is natural to expect more of this. I'd expect more in the next months. It will be a very difficult, uphill struggle to return to the path of sanity. From our side, these acts of violence will be good reason for the Israelis not to give in. The break will not come—and this is the main point—unless somehow the Palestinians manage to develop a new pattern of thinking, a new state of mind among themselves, in the way they act with the Israelis."

He stopped for a moment, as if to consider his language carefully. Then he shrugged and when he spoke he used a curious metaphor.

"The Palestinians have to resurrect the spirit of Christ to absorb the sense of pain and insult they feel and control it, and not let it determine the way they act toward Israel," Nusseibeh said. "They have to realize that an act of violence does not serve their interest. This is a gigantic undertaking."

It is indicative of Nusseibeh's elusiveness that his metaphor spoke at once of Palestinian martyrdom, the myth of Jewish violence against Jesus, and the need for a new culture of peace. ♦

A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE PATRIOT

John Pitner thought that the battle for America would begin in Whatcom County, and that he would lead it.

BY JANE KRAMER

The enemy took John Pitner, by subterfuge and surprise, on a hot midsummer Saturday when no one could really be expected to stand and fight, and the result was that John lost his liberty before he had a chance to save America. The date was July 27, 1996, the time was five in the afternoon, and the place was a low gray prefabricated house hidden in a small riverine clearing in the woods of Whatcom County, Washington, about eighteen miles inland from Bellingham Bay, and not much farther than that from the Canadian border.

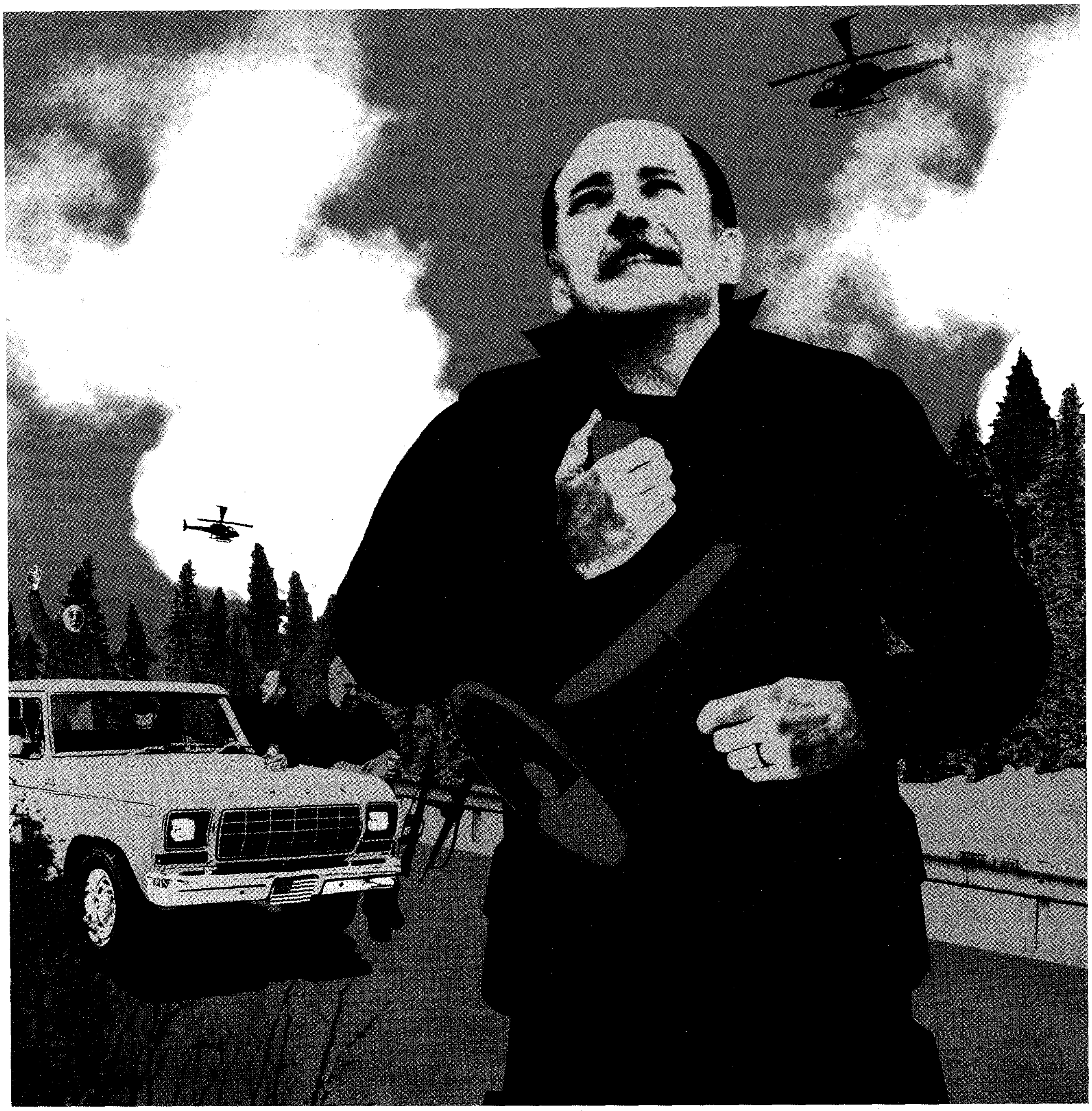
In Bellingham, at five, people were already shaking off the day—getting into their cars and heading down to the harbor to watch the kayaks come home. But out in the county, in the tangled scrub and wayward woods that only the oldest Whatcom loggers could still remember as breathing forest, the air was heavy, and people were sitting around watching reruns, too listless to enjoy the liberty they had. John himself wasn't watching anything. He was thinking about the real-estate agent who had called twice to say that she was on her way with clients, and, of course, he was also thinking about the invasion of the New World Order, wondering whether, given the imminence of the invasion, it was worth his while to put a second coat of gray paint on the wooden deck of a house that was up for sale anyway.

John was very concerned about his liberty. He believed that liberty was something God had guaranteed to men like him, men who were Patriots, and that now the New World Order was chipping it away, like the deck paint on his own porch. When he was out pitching Armageddon, in his official capacity as founder, promoter, banker, quartermaster, and commander-in-chief of a Patriot army he called the Washington State Militia, he would sometimes raise his right hand and swear to die fighting to preserve his liberty and yours. "Yup, that's me, give me liberty or give me death," he'd say, after a thoughtful pause that seemed to suggest that, whatever you might have heard to the contrary, the phrase, along with the sentiment, was his. He was armed, he was ready for the big battle, and he never intended to get stopped in his hero's tracks—stopped, much less, in old shorts and a T-shirt, in his own house, at the end of a summer day, by a small woman with a 9-mm. Glock, a pair of handcuffs, and a badge from the Federal Bureau of Investigation—but that was what in fact happened. And by all accounts he surrendered quietly, though not without warning Special Agent Catherine Fahey, of the Bureau's Bellingham office, that if he was out of phone contact with the Patriot world for more than twenty-four hours militias all over the country would go on "tac-4 alert" and his own militiamen—seven thousand of them, he told her—would be deployed. He called it a declaration of war.

When I first met John Pitner, four months before his arrest, there were more than eight hundred known militia groups on the Patriot fringe of the American right—which is to say active, identifiable, self-designated, paramilitary citizens' reserves teetering aboveground on the perch of their First Amendment right to speak freely and assemble peaceably and their Second Amendment license to buy arms and organize. Today, there are fewer than two hundred. Some people claim that the militia movement is over. Some claim that it was never much of a movement anyway, since in theory all you ever really needed to make a militia was one like-minded friend and the loan of a hunting rifle. Militias that courted attention—militias with leaders like John, who went public with their names and numbers and what he called their "Good Samaritan faces"—were, almost by definition, the easiest ones to infiltrate and defuse. And an argument can be made that today, with the right in the White House, a few of those militiamen have started sleeping better: the country has a born-again President; an attorney general who is more highly regarded on the Patriot Web sites than in the *Times;* and a House whip who sounds as if John Pitner drafted his stump speeches. But the fact is that the number of people said to be *in* militias hasn't changed. Estimates I've seen run from an improbably modest ten thousand to an improbably cautionary hundred thousand, and, this being pretty much what they ran in the mid-nineties, it could also be argued that the ranks of the armed, hard-core underground groups you've never heard of have simply increased accordingly. In the event, it would be wise to remember that the imagined enemy of all those militiamen who *aren't* sleeping better is the same enemy that drove Timothy McVeigh to blow up a building in Oklahoma City seven years ago—not to mention the same enemy that inspired Osama bin Laden to take the jihad to New York and Washington in September last year. Cathy Logg, who used to cover crime for the Bellingham *Herald*, told me that after John Pitner's first trial ended, in 1997, she'd fought to keep the story of the Washington State Militia open. "My boss kind of thought, They've arrested these guys, and the rattlesnake is dead, and I said, 'Noooo, they've just cut off the rattle.' " And it may be that she was right.

John's particular claim to attention, the spring I met him, was his "intel" that the fight for America was going to start in Whatcom County. He told me what

There are fewer militia groups today than there were a decade ago. But whoever is left is serious. Nothing about hate has changed.

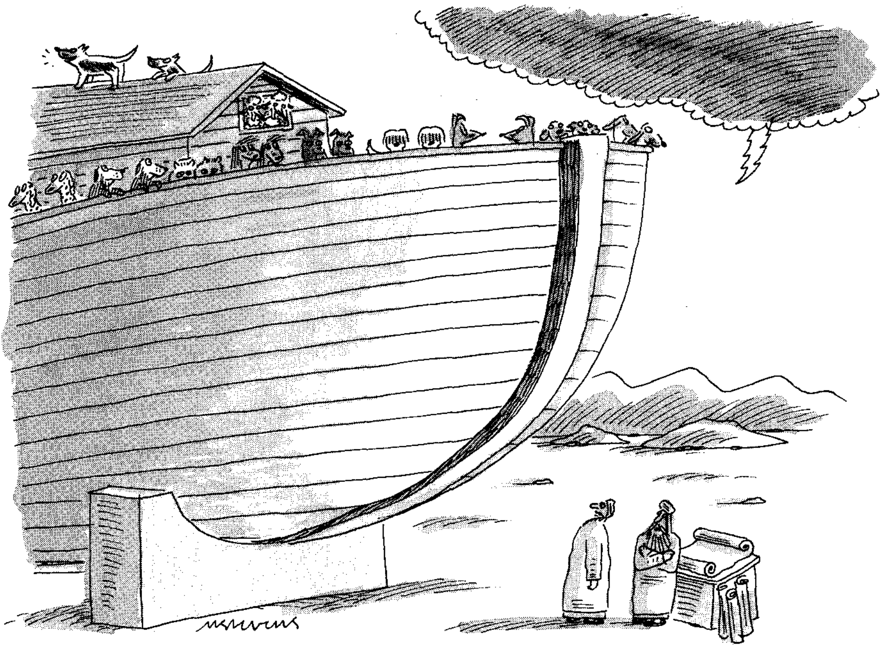


JOHN RITTER

he had told his men: that the enemy they called the New World Order—the President and the United States Army and the United Nations troops and the F.B.I. SWAT teams and the Earth First! terrorists and all the other conspirators who took their orders from the Marxist élite on the Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission and got their weapons from the eight Jewish bankers who owned the Federal Reserve—was going to cross the Canadian border just below Vancouver, and fan out from Interstate 5 to launch its invasion on Valley Highway, the very road where John and his wife, Debbie, had put their house. He never said, not precisely, that the masterminds of the New World Order had chosen Valley Highway because a Patriot by the name of John Pitner lived there. He liked to present himself as a modest man, just an honest citizen doing what he could to alert his neighbors to the great conspiracy against them. But the truth was that he took some pride in being ground zero in the coming Patriot wars, the personal front line of a citizens' army that stretched, as he put it, from Valley Highway all the way to New Hampshire. He swore that the New World Order wasn't going to take America as long as John Pitner was alive and fighting in Whatcom County. He had got the "messages," and he was prepared.

John was a man who kept to himself. This was something his neighbors respected, perhaps because so many of them had reason to keep to themselves, too. People had been disappearing into the woods of Whatcom County—into the wild ash groves and up the foothills rolling east to Mt. Baker and the North Cascades—for as long as people had been coming to the state of Washington. You could say that this was the charm of Whatcom County, and the neighbors were not insensitive to it. They had respected the secretive, solitary ways of draft resisters and blissed-out hippies and marijuana farmers and students who bicycled out to communes after class at Bellingham's Western Washington University. They had respected the ways of gun enthusiasts and gyppo loggers and ecologists who came to preach against logging. They had respected the ways of home-schooling fundamentalists who came to protect their children from the influence of sex educators and biology teachers, and of Vietnam veterans who came to grieve, and maybe even to chase their demons, in backwoods cabins where nobody from what they called "the world" could find them. Leaving your neighbor alone, not asking questions, understanding that a man has a right to his own thoughts and his own beliefs and his own insanity—people in Whatcom County said that that was what the American West was all about.

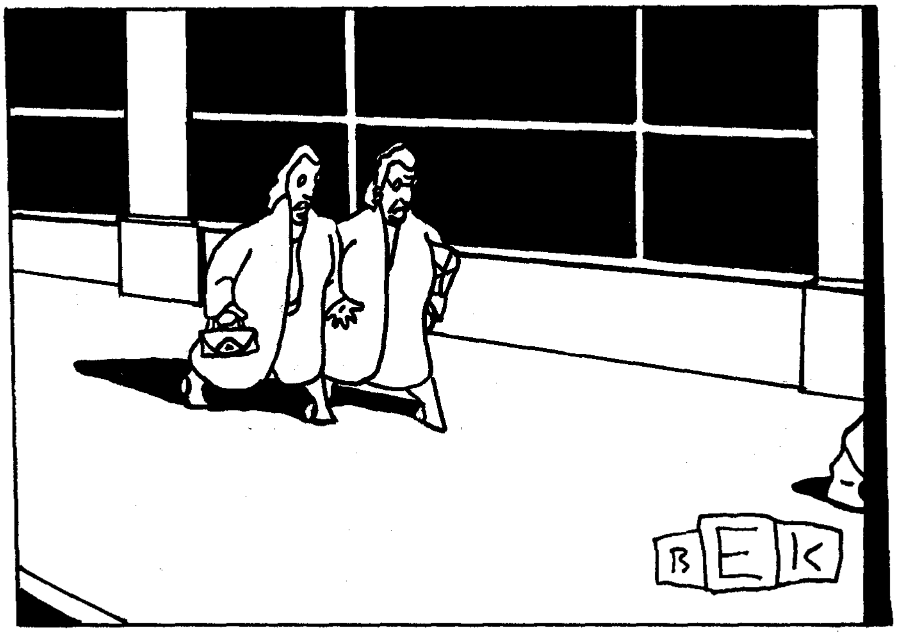
So it's probably safe to say that John's neighbors were curious but not overly alarmed when, in November of 1995, he posted a notice inviting them to a gathering he would later refer to, with historic solemnity, as "the first public meeting of the Washington State Militia." About forty came. They sat in the local grange, in front of a big yellow banner with a black rattlesnake coiled on it—"Don't Tread On Me," the banner said—and listened to John describe the terrible plot to enslave them. But, even then, the most they could really have told you about John Pitner was that he was the stranger with the small spread down in the woods by the south fork of the Nooksack River. A few of the neighbors claimed to have seen John's wife—Debbie was a good-looking blonde, shy but at six feet tall hard to miss, even in a crowd—nursing a drink, after work, at the Nooksack River Casino. And a few actually knew their daughter, Rachel, who was a high-spirited, friendly girl and had spent a couple of years at the local high school. But until that night at the grange all they really knew about John Pitner or his politics was that he flew his Stars and Stripes from the tallest flagpole on Valley Highway; they knew this because they could see the top of it poking through the trees. As John was fond of saying, the only thing that stood between the American flag and the flag of the United Nations was Patriots like him.



"Obviously, somebody screwed up somewhere."

When people in the Patriot movement pictured a great leader, it was usually somebody more like John's mentor, John Trochmann, the head of the Militia of Montana, or, as it was affectionately known in the movement, MOM. Trochmann was a hustler of such cunning and persuasive gravitas that he could sell you anything. (John told me that the year he met Trochmann he ran up a bill for ten thousand dollars' worth of MOM survival gear, conspiracy tapes and books, and "documentary" videos.) And Trochmann looked like a prophet. People who'd seen him said that, with his homespun clothes and granite face and fine white beard, he could have stepped right out of a painting. No one said things like that about John Pitner. John looked more petulant than prophetic. He was five feet seven. He had ordinary brown hair combed carefully across a balding crown, big teeth, a rabbity smile, and the bland babyish face of a man at some remove from the lessons of reality, or, you could say, from the doubts or reflections that eventually line most faces with what is known as character. What John had, at his most unguarded, was a kind of goofy charm. He blushed when he was proud of something, or surprised. You would see his ears redden, and then his neck, and his face, and as soon as he was all red his cheeks would puff and he'd explode with a big hee-haw. And he was good on his feet; he had hammy but effective timing. He would start a tirade about the New World Order and the coming war, and, just before your eyes glazed over, he would cut it short with a little joke at his own expense. He would pat his paunch and shrug, looking a little sheepish, and then the blush would start and he'd say, "Now, if you're a patriot, or a patriotic individual, you're a pot-gut, middle-aged, balding . . ." The sentence would trail off, with John braying in his aw-shucks way, because, after all, this was *the* John Pitner—John the Commander, as his wife called him—taking a moment to step down from his pedestal and show you he was just as human as the next guy.

It was not a sentence he was likely to finish anyway; he was, in fact, quite vain. He steamed his face pink and shiny. He loved clothes, and what he lacked in taste he made up for in self-regard. He was very careful about entrances. When he had an appointment with someone he didn't know, he'd call a militiaman to come over and "run security" at the door—by which he meant open the door. He told me that Trochmann never met anyone without "security," but I suspect that John did it to give himself time to change out of the sweats he usually wore and choose the right clothes for the occasion. When I met him, "security" was a spectral recruit who lurked somewhere inside his own camouflage of black beard, baggy black overalls, dark glasses, and a black cap pulled so low on his forehead that all I could see of him besides his two pale hands was the tip of his nose. He circled the Pitners' living room, watching me closely in case I started opening drawers or filching papers, not saying a word until a door to the living room burst open and John emerged, in an apple-green terry-cloth bathrobe belted over a pair of immaculately creased pants, with a white towel around his neck and a telephone at his ear. He dismissed the recruit, with a wave of his free hand, and for the next ten minutes he paced the room, barking into the phone. Eventually, he acknowledged me with a helpless smile. There were so many urgent matters competing for his attention, so many enemies threatening his America, that John, I could see, was running late just thinking about them all.



"You always think this is going to be the sconce that changes everything for you."

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People living in the woods of Whatcom County tend to believe in enemies, and the ones who joined the Washington State Militia believed in them long before John moved there. They thought of the America "out there," the America that eluded them, the America spinning and speeding into a future way beyond their competence and even their comprehension, as not just complicated but hostile, which may be why John's delusions did, in the end, thrive in their occasional company. They were eager for something simple, for some way to take their vague and unsettled grudges against the taxes and zoning codes and environmental regulations that mocked their heritage as free white American men and to connect those grudges to whatever *was* "out there," or, at any rate, to the sort of people they were unlikely ever to encounter in Whatcom County—the immigrant hordes and ghetto masses waiting to swarm in after the invasion and rape their women, murder their children, and even steal their guns. They wanted enemies who were *responsible*, the way Russia had been responsible, because, now that the Berlin Wall was down and the Communists were gone, they seemed to have lost their bearings. They didn't know why, if the Russians had been to blame for every humiliation, every failure, they still suffered from the same problems. In this, they were just like John Pitner. John may have been deluded, but his biggest delusion was the one that sold. He said that America would be his again, once the war was won and the conspiracy shattered, and he promised to share it with anyone who joined him in the fight.

Certain things in America were particularly worrisome to John, and the one he usually began with, the "first and foremost" worrisome thing, was the chairman emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations, David Rockefeller. John had a chart—most Patriots had one—of all the important politicians on the council, cross-referenced with the membership list of the Trilateral Commission. It counted as one of his most valuable documents, and he kept it displayed on his coffee table, like an art book or a slick monthly. He would pick it up, pointing to the name David Rockefeller, right on top, read out the title—"Political Dominance Through Four Administrations"—and then demand of his audience what better proof was needed that the American people had already been betrayed. From Rockefeller, it was an easy jump to Alan Greenspan and the Federal Reserve, which John knew for a fact was a private bank, with a huge warehouse stacked with dollars, that laundered cash for the International Monetary Fund, which, in turn, used that cash to buy more armies for the United Nations, which itself was responsible for the tens of thousands of Russian troops training at that very moment close to Valley Highway, which everyone knew was already studded with microchips that tracked the lives of Whatcom County's children, controlling their moods and their movements and targeting young Patriots for "special surveillance."

John believed in his documents and his info and his intel the way a fundamentalist believes in the Bible—not as his word but as *the* Word, absolute, incontrovertible. You didn't argue with John. People who did were either in the conspiracy or dupes to the conspiracy (which he warned me I was, as a Council on Foreign Relations member), and in any event they were wrong. John had done his research. He had seen the videos and heard the tapes and talked to the "experts" and ordered the right books, the ones you wouldn't find at the Bellingham Public Library. Nearly every day, he logged on to a computer and downloaded the latest news of the conspiracy—the classified pictures of the concentration camps that the government was building to exterminate Patriots like him, the secret account books of Bill Clinton's Arkansas drug-running operation—and, as he liked to say, he never saw anything to change his mind.

When John first came to Whatcom County, in 1981, he was thirty years old and, by most reckonings, a failure, living from hand to mouth as an occasional electrostatic-spray painter for the big shipbuilders of the Washington coast, making good money for a couple of months and then spending a whole season out of work. After seven unhappy years in a trailer park by Lake Samish, he bought his ten acres on the south fork of the Nooksack and settled into the woods, waiting for his luck and the world to change. He was still waiting on the morning of April 19, 1993—the day of his forty-second birthday and, as he usually claimed, of his decision to start a militia and save America. Having nothing to do that morning, or for that matter most mornings, he had just poured himself a cup of coffee and switched on the television news to see what terrible things were happening. Waco, of course, was what was happening. Waco, Texas, was John's first "message" from David Rockefeller. If there were earlier messages—say, Ruby Ridge, Idaho, where a shoot-out between federal agents and a white-supremacist scofflaw named Randy Weaver had left an agent, Weaver's wife, and one of his children dead—John had missed them. Waco became the symbol for his distress, and it made a convenient symbol, what with so many dead, and such a terrifying show of government panic and government power. Never mind that David Koresh's Branch Davidian family was incestuous and polygamous; John decided that the Branch Davidians had died defending the family values of the American right. He had woken up and watched the news—"watched eighty-one women and children incinerated . . . watched tanks bulldoze the crime"—and it was "just like being in Russia or some Third World country." He "took Waco personally," and perhaps it wasn't long before he saw the advantage to himself, the compensatory glimmer of attention, even the makings of a calling, in taking Waco personally.

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RHYTHM AND BLUES

Passion killings, plane crashes, overdoses,
accidental and intended;

Suicides, bus wrecks, women;
the inability to choose between one

woman and another; heroin, booze, the inability
to choose between pleasure

and the Lord; men, prison, the white man,
the white man who owns

the record company; all of this delineated
as melismatic celebration

of disaster and the gut-wrenching agony
of joy, the anger and hush of the naked

soul alone, sighing and shouting intensely
hyperbolic declarations of erotic

heroism—*anywhere, baby, anyhow,*
skidding out of control and into the next-

John's dates, like his stories, changed with the telling, but, by Debbie's account, it wasn't more than a year later that John did discover Idaho. He drove there and spent a day with a local Patriot who turned out to be a specialist in the New World Order. The Patriot played John videos and gave him advice—convert your money into gold and silver and stash it—and even took him into the woods and showed him Idaho militiamen training for war. But, most important, he told John who his enemies were. As John put it, "What I was learning fit my paranoia." John came home inspired, and it wasn't long before the first two cells of the Washington State Militia were training in the woods themselves. Debbie was so relieved to see John enthusiastic about something, even if that something was a war on Valley Highway, that, as she said later, "I welcomed the militia." Before the militia, John had been hopelessly withdrawn. "Lost in society" was the way she described him to me. He would quit a job or talk himself into a get-rich scheme that ate into her salary and their small savings, and then his bravado would crack and he'd withdraw into a kind of furious isolation. But now, suddenly, he was "John the Militia." He and Debbie started getting out and meeting new people, and it didn't much matter to her that those people believed, like John, that the Bellingham airport had a "portable" concentration camp. John was a new man, busy and actually cheerful as he got ready to die fighting David Rockefeller.

John told the neighbors who called up after the grange meeting that, if they joined his militia, they would all be equals in the leaderless resistance. The only difference between them and him, at least as he explained it to me, was in the "need-to-know"—which, put plainly, meant that *he* needed to know where the guns were stashed and the money hidden and the battle plans stored and they did not. His idea was a little bit Trochmann, a little bit Irish Republican Army, and a little bit Lenin, though he'd never admit to Lenin. It's doubtful whether he knew anything about Lenin beyond the fact that Lenin was a Leninist, definitely part of the conspiracy, but he was careful to call his militia units "squads," not "cells," because he knew that cells were what Leninists had. He wanted his squads to be small. He liked to say

to-the-last chorus and over the bridge and key
change, popping the balloon of a heart inflated

with humiliation and pain and replacing it
with guttural and shrieking glissandos

—*I once was lost and now am found*—
as if a singer were an angel commissioned

in the highest holy orders, as if a song had wings
extended into flight and feathers of shelter—

as if true love and its fraternal twin, the blues,
possessed equally the powers of devotion

and redemption, as if the one true heaven
were standing around the corner, laughing

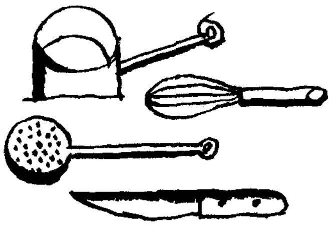
drunk, and locked with lust and abandon
into the ever-loving arms of the mortal world.

—*Anthony Walton*

that six men from the same town were only a couple of calls away from action when the invasion started; that is, if the enemy didn't think to cut the phone lines first. Each squad leader would report to a district leader, who, in turn, would report to John, making him the only man in the Washington State Militia to have anything like a list of members, or a cash or weapons tally, or, indeed, access to the men he referred to solemnly as "my superiors."

John's first recruits were mainly local talent. They weren't promising, but they had the advantage of being there. Of course, it was hard to tell if they were *all* that was there, or were really, as John assured them, an "inner circle," the point men in a network of squads that stretched across the state of Washington. John himself ran the squad called Alpha One. He loved the military sound of "Alpha." "Yup, I'm Alpha One, I'm the idiot with the headaches," he told me. Alpha One was his "leadership squad," the place where his local commanders would trade intel and plot strategy and brief their leader on what was happening in the war zone. But the truth was that anyone who showed up regularly for John's weekly meetings on Valley Highway could consider himself Alpha One, and usually did.

John's second-in-command at Alpha One (the man he called "my assistant director") was a pudgy Bellingham mason by the name of Frederick Fisher. Fred was sixty, a grandfather, and according to John much admired by everyone in the leadership squad. Like John, he took a firm stand against the government's intrusion into American family life, though it's possible that his particular firm stand had less to do with Patriot principles than with the fact that, in the early eighties, the government had convicted him of "incest in the first degree," on the testimony of the sixteen-year-old stepdaughter he had been raping since she was nine. By avoiding a trial (he pleaded guilty), Fred had got out of jail on the ninetieth day of a ten-year suspended sentence. So it wasn't surprising that, so many years later, he thought of the whole affair as too trivial to mention to John or, for that matter, to any of the other militiamen who admired him.



Fred had a disciple named Marlin Mack, a tall, pasty-faced, sandy-haired man in his early twenties who started coming with him to Alpha One. Marlin's lawyer described him to me at one point as "insecure," because he hadn't had friends, or even a date, in high school—he'd always been a little too nervous, a little too wired for his classmates. But in John Pitner's militia the more wired Marlin was, the more everybody seemed to accept him. Some of the Alpha One regulars had a Good Samaritan pitch, like John's. They liked to think of themselves as a public service—just a few neighborly guys on the ready to haul sandbags in a flood or shovel a neighbor's driveway in a snowstorm. But Marlin had no interest in his neighbors' driveways. "Fucking saving people, my ass!" was how he once put it. "We're going to go on a killing spree."

Marlin became a kind of militia mascot. He made the men feel younger, which wasn't hard, given the ages of some of them. Donald Ellwanger, a veterinarian known in the county as Old Doc Ellwanger, was at least seventy. Back in the eighties, Doc Ellwanger had fallen in with a group of Christian Patriot hustlers and, through them, eventually met a "minister" who went by the name Roger Allen Davis of the Lord Jesus Christ and gave his address as "Kingdom of God, Washington Republic." Davis had provided Doc with "sovereign citizen's" papers—papers declaring Donald Ellwanger to be a sovereign citizen of the true United States and absolving him of any debts to the United States he happened to live in now. Then, according to Doc's wife, Judie, Davis and his friends "took everything" they had. This left the Ellwangers owing a great deal of money to the Internal Revenue Service, and with no way to begin paying, should Doc ever consider paying, which he didn't. (Judie accepted her husband philosophically. "Who else is going to take on an old bag like me, with twenty cats?" was how she described their marriage.) The Ellwangers weren't "leadership," but they gave the militia a folksy cachet. People in Bellingham, liberal people, talked with affection about Doc Ellwanger's way with a sick puppy, and the only other Alpha One regular they said anything that nice about was Gary Kuehnoel, a mild-mannered and reclusive gunsmith in his late forties who had injured his back in an accident in Alaska and was now home in Washington, nursing his ailing father on what was left of the family farm. Gary may have had odd views, but he would cheerfully fix anything of the neighbors' that needed fixing, from their lawn mower to their grandmother's toaster.

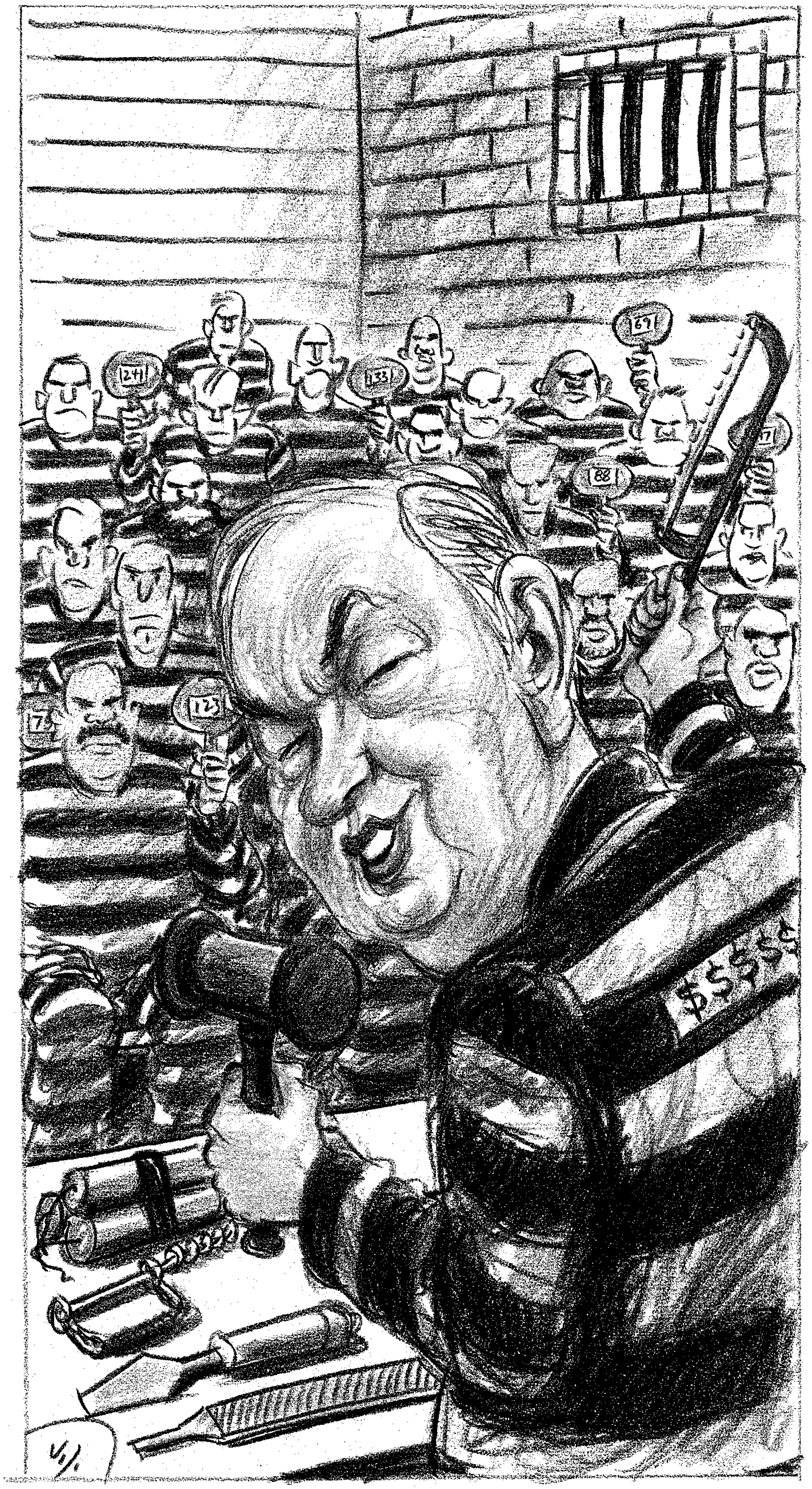
Then there was Brian McDugle, John's oldest friend and his "key squad leader," down the coast in Anacortes. Brian was a huge, wiry character with wild blue eyes, shaggy blond hair, a big mustache, and a notably contentious disposition. "I'm a protester of the highest order" was the way he started a conversation, building to the moment when he leaned over and looked you straight in the eye and said, "I got this little nuclear reactor . . . down in the basement." He had made the reactor himself—he swore to it—and that wasn't all. There was also the matter of the forty thousand dollars' worth of raw nuclear fuel he kept in a couple of coffee cups on his basement table. "It's a little bigger than God," he told me, describing his reactor, and he must have known, because he'd already been dead three times and had "seen" Jesus. It was easy to see what Brian had to offer John. His reactor. His nuclear coffee cups. And, most of all, his loyalty. He and John went back twenty-five years and shared the same fantasies, and for that, if for no other reason, he was determined to protect John. If any militiaman breathed a word against him, Brian reported in.

Early in the summer of 1995, a new recruit by the name of Edwin Maeurer started showing up at squad meetings. Ed Maeurer was an auto mechanic, a nondescript sort of person, short and spreading a little as he edged toward forty. He ran a Mobil station and garage in the town of Ferndale, and customers who didn't know him well enough to know that he had a history of passing bad checks, and three convictions, would drive in and look at Ed, with his neat brown beard and his plain, thick glasses,

ALFRED TAUBMAN'S NEXT AUCTION

Rebuked by a federal judge for failing to show remorse, A. Alfred Taubman, the principal owner and former chairman of Sotheby's, was sentenced yesterday to a year and a day in prison and fined $7.5 million for leading a six-year price-fixing scheme with its rival Christie's that swindled auction house customers out of more than $100 million.

—*The Times.*



VICTOR JUHASZ

and think how lucky they were to have found someone they could trust with a busted engine, or with an old transmission that some other mechanic had unloaded on them the week before. One of those happy customers was Doc Ellwanger, who liked Ed Maeurer and didn't want him to have to face the invasion unprepared. By August, Ed was Alpha One, and was running the squad called Alpha Two.

John was eager to share the special "counter-insurgency" skills that he said had earned him "super-high marks" in the Army, during a stint he liked to describe as "training second lieutenants for the Special Forces." (It was more like artillery grunt, court martial, and six months in a Panama stockade.) He knew how to construct a barricade of bamboo sticks. He knew how to transform a mousetrap into the trigger for a bomb. He knew how to use a battery on a trip wire to ignite a fuse. He knew how to pack a five-gallon pail so that everything you needed to survive in the mountains would fit in it. And, most important, he knew how to make you feel a part of the family at Command Central—as he'd begun referring to his house—with Debbie there, smiling at the door, and John himself so responsible and reassuring.

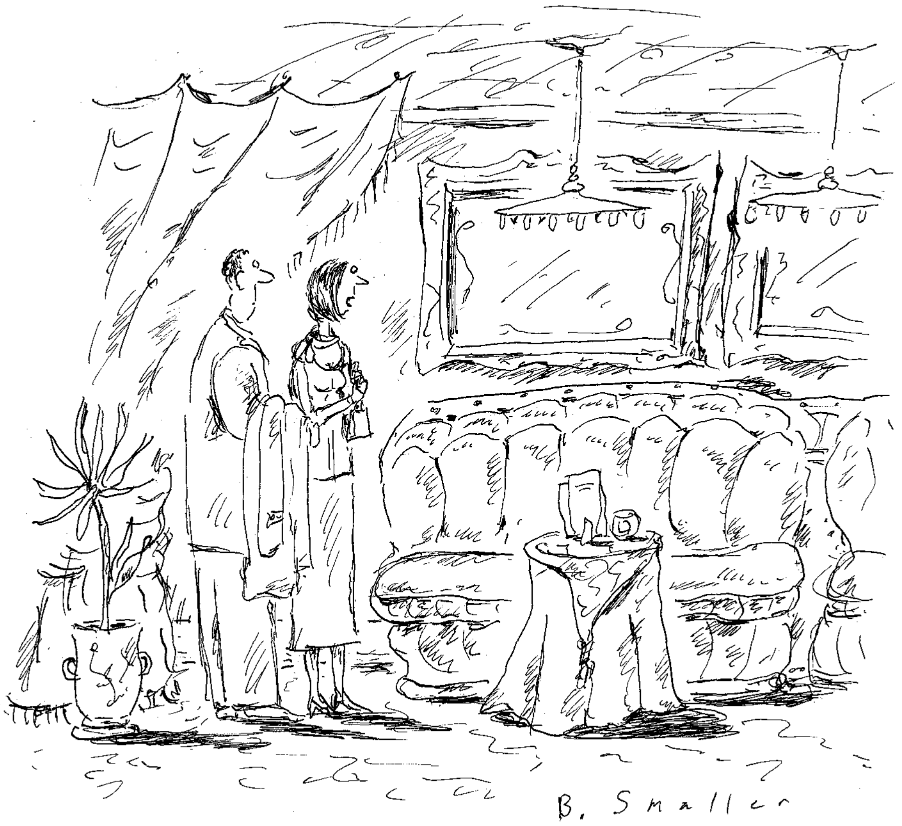
People were listening to John now. On January 13, 1996, a hundred people showed up to hear him speak at a public meeting in Port Townsend, out on the Olympic Peninsula. A day later, he drove over to Mount Vernon for a meeting of nearly four hundred people. John Trochmann was the main speaker, and clearly the main attraction, at Mount Vernon, but most of the audience already knew his speech by heart—it was the "Enemies: Foreign & Domestic" speech that came with the videos he sold at militia rallies—whereas John Pitner's speech, by comparison, was entertaining. John warmed up the crowd with a little of his bashful-middle-aged-hero routine: "I'm losing my hair, so if that makes me a skinhead, well, I don't know," he said, early on, and got everybody laughing. He watched his language. "Basically, this country is in deep doo-doo" was about the strongest thing he said, though calling the government "a crock of baloney" brought the most applause. He even invited some protesters standing outside to come in and listen. ("And you don't need to be Jewish," he told them, by way of a small joke not one of them appreciated.) And he remembered to end his talk with "God bless America." He was so encouraged by the response that he went on the road with Trochmann again, in March, and a month later they were together in Seattle, with Trochmann debating a local activist at one of the Seattle ABC affiliate's "town meetings" and John, planted in the audience, standing up to speak for the concerned citizen.

It seemed to John, during those first few months of attention, that he had discovered a vast constituency. He would log on to the Patriot Web sites and see his name. He would tap a key and learn everything he needed to know about the world from "experts" who were counting on him to, as he put it, "share the intel." He lived in a kind of unsourced-data fugue. By the time I knew him, he was for all purposes incapable of reflection. His certainty was seamless and deep, and perhaps because of this he began to work his head the way he had learned to work his computer, deleting reality as he went along. In a sense, he was as much a victim of the information age as a participant in it; his access to truth, as he saw it, was so simple and direct that he had no need for an interlocutor, only for an audience—which is probably why his fantasies could sprout like flowers in a biosphere.

It may be that the worst thing that happened to John during his few years as a commander was that life went on so peacefully in Whatcom County. None of the serious training he'd organized, none of the serious talks he'd given about income and output and the cost of ordnance, made up for the fact that the invasion never came. The older militiamen wanted to see action before arthritis, or worse, kicked in, and the younger militiamen were bored and, given that this was small-town Washington, dangerously restless. By the spring of 1996, there were six squads with connections to Alpha One meeting weekly in Whatcom County, and most of the people in those squads were sick of the routine: the Pledge of Allegiance; the opening minutes; the short discussion of enemy activity known as "current events"; and the hour or so of training or instruction or "weapons news" or debate on, say, the explosive properties of Epsom salts. John swore to the group that the invasion was close at hand; that, at a word from him, the big Patriot guns and tanks would join the battle. But he couldn't provide his militiamen with that battle. The closest he came, during the spring of 1996, was the famous standoff in Jordan, Montana, between the federal government and a group of Freemen squatting on the ranch they'd bought, forfeited, and then claimed as sovereign territory. The Washington State Militia went on "high alert"—which kept a lot of militiamen busy comparing room rates at the Jordan motels—but when the Freemen surrendered, in June, without a shot fired, John's troops were more disappointed than relieved. They thought that they had ordered a revolution the way you ordered a hamburger with fries at Denny's. When the service was slow, they began to blame the waiter.

Kevin (Rock) Jackson went to his first militia meeting in April of 1996, a month or two after he'd appeared in Bellingham, looking for people who might be interested in doing business. Rock was a dealer in stolen ordnance. He let it be known that he and a partner in the Army in California—the partner supplied, Rock sold—were eager to expand their operations into northern Washington, which had a reputation for lively border traffic. Ed Maeurer, who had known Rock's family in California, vouched for him with the local underworld, and it wasn't long before Rock began showing up for meetings with Marlin Mack's squad.

Marlin worshipped Rock Jackson. He was Marlin's idea of a real leader—young, tough-talking, and direct, not nervous and evasive like John. He even looked like a leader, blond and sturdy, with a strong square jaw. In no time, he was virtually running Marlin's squad. Nothing that Rock told Marlin and the others was really that different from what John had told them. The difference was that Rock put his time and his money where his mouth was. He set up bomb drops and gun transfers. He arranged delivery of explosives and saw to it that his friends got good emergency IDs from a couple of Seattle Freemen (homemade-bomb specialists whom



"I don't feel we've known each other long enough to sit in a booth."

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John himself had met for a "secret strategy session," at a Howard Johnson's off the Interstate, a few days into the Jordan siege). By June, Rock had even provided the leadership with a real headquarters. A place that was safe. Safer, at any rate, than Ed Maeurer's garage had been on the day that one of those Freemen showed up for a demonstration of pipe bombs, and Ed's daughter was having a birthday party right outside. The new headquarters was in a Bellingham office development called Haskell Business Park. Rock envisioned it as part warehouse and part classroom, and every inch of it a secret, so secret that not even John knew it was there.

Rock had a talent for bringing out the best in people. He saw potential where John saw mainly his own reflection. He liked the men to "contribute" their ideas. Gary's idea was to plant explosives in an empty house, alert the F.B.I. with an anonymous phone call, and blow up the agents who arrived to check it out. Fred's was to take out the agents with hand grenades. Even Marlin had something to contribute; Marlin was interested in chemical and biological warfare, and his idea was to kill the agents slowly, with "festive mortar balls" or poison darts. Rock took all their ideas to heart, but in the end the best idea was his own. It wasn't exactly war, but it held the prospect of being profitable. What Rock wanted was to put his new friends in the pipe-bomb business—he offered to broker the sales—with half the profits going to the Washington State Militia. He knew how hard it must be for boys like Marlin, waiting and waiting for something interesting to happen. And he must have felt for the older militiamen, like Fred, whose feelings John had hurt, taking away his title as assistant director—just because Cathy Logg had looked Fred up in the county-courthouse records and put that old story about him and his stepdaughter in the Bellingham *Herald*—without even having the Christian courtesy to consult Fred first.

John, admittedly, wasn't thinking clearly. He had a lot on his mind beside Rock Jackson's ambitions or Fred Fisher's sensitivities. ("A little problem" was how he described Fred's incest conviction to me.) For one thing, there was Debbie. For years, John had had a riff about his wife. He would tell you that Debbie Pitner was the only woman he knew who could "earn the money, shoot the bird, chop the wood, and cook the dinner," and he could easily have added "build the kitchen," since Debbie was largely responsible for the labor that had gone into putting their house together. At the time, of course, she had thought of the house as home and not as Command Central, though when she finally left John—she moved out in April of 1996—he considered it not merely a betrayal of the Patriot cause but another terrible message from Rockefeller's side. He said to his men, "My wife . . . might just as well have been working for the New World Order."

Debbie was thirty-eight then. She had been living with John since she was thirteen. "John was my big romance," she told me one of the first times we talked. She had been this "dumb little Anacortes schoolgirl" just settling into her first week of eighth grade. John was this "wonderful older man" of twenty, just back from his Panama triumphs. And neither of them could really say they'd planned it—only that John had pulled up to the curb at her junior high school, and Debbie had slipped out of her homeroom, and by evening they were in Tacoma. For years, Debbie managed the family accounts, conducting all its business in her maiden name. It was an arrangement that kept John a step ahead of the I.R.S. and the state government and, for that matter, of anyone in the county looking to get a bill paid. John wasn't interested in steady jobs. When Debbie began to get out into the world and in her own way prosper, he pretty much stopped looking for work at all. He told the family that he had gone into the landscaping business, but Debbie said that by then he was "more like the house parent." There was nothing in the least romantic between them now besides a few good memories. It was clear to her that John hadn't really wanted the Debbie with the good job and the credit line. He'd wanted the eighth grader from the boondocks who thought he was the smartest man ever to set foot in the state of Washington. "I still respect John's opinion," she told me. "But he thinks that I'm off base and I don't understand."

It didn't help that, a few days after Debbie left, the F.B.I. "zapped" John's brain. "Forty-four thousand volts of lasers" was how he described the experience. He was out on his deck, nursing a cup of coffee and fretting about his marriage, fretting about the Montana Freemen and about the war he had promised to start if any of the Freemen were harmed, when he felt a jolt and collapsed onto the table from "all that voltage" passing through his head; he woke, trembling, in a pool of sweat, unable to remember anything that had happened in the last five days. The doctor he went to see in Bellingham disagreed with John's diagnosis. He assumed that John had had a mild stroke, or even a short epileptic seizure, and ordered tests in Seattle. But when the tests were negative he changed his mind and decided that John had almost certainly had "some type of stress conversion reaction," indicating that "the person is experiencing things that are more than they really feel they're able to cope with." And he may have been right about that.

John was running out of stories. He had told his men about big guns and weapons stashes, but none of them knew where to find those stashes. He had told them about a "brother," a secret Patriot high up in the F.B.I., who was feeding him important, classified information, but none of them knew that brother. He had told them about "contributions"—five thousand dollars from one Seattle admirer—but none of them knew where those contributions had gone. And he had told them about secret lists—the whole hierarchy of the Patriot revolution—but none of them knew where he kept those lists. None of them even had a name and number to call for help when the war started and John was dead, the first martyr to the Patriot cause, and they were cut off and under fire and hiding in a couple of freezing caves without a clue to where John had buried the buckets with their long johns and their matches, let alone their ammunition. John's advice, on reflection, seemed a little perfunctory. "At night, you hunker down and bury yourself with a bunch of dead leaves, go to sleep," he told them. It wasn't exactly Clausewitz as a battle plan, but, as he said, the rest was need-to-know, and the men were getting a little impatient with need-to-know. John, in fact, was becoming so evasive on the subject of their survival that some of the men began to wonder whether he wasn't some sort of federal agent. And that was just what John was beginning to wonder about them.

Sometime in May, John told a few of the men in Alpha One that he was "resigning" from his responsibilities as director of the Washington State Militia. He wasn't leaving the militia, and he certainly wasn't breaking his ties with the Seattle Freemen. In fact, there were days that spring and summer when he seemed to have forgotten that he had stepped down. But he stopped holding his weekly leadership meetings. He told me that he needed to recover from the zapping, and from Debbie, and from Fred Fisher, and, most of all, he needed to let the militiamen who were starting to bellyache about John Pitner at squad meetings see just how long they could "float" without him. Being a leader of men was tiring. It seemed to John that the only militiaman he could talk to lately was his old friend Brian—who suspected everyone except John of telling lies or making trouble or simply being trouble—though the truth was that some of the men were sympathetic, if not precisely compassionate. They wished John well. They hoped he got better. All they wanted from him now was a couple of telephone numbers and a map of their ordnance stashes—something to reassure them in the event he got zapped again. And, in their own way, they let him know. Sometimes, the phone would ring at Command Central, and when John picked up there'd be a husky threat or a click after a long silence. Once, he walked outside in the morning to find the tires on his pickup slashed.

At meetings, John had always been able to second-guess his men, to take their arguments about need-to-know and convince them that they all knew something, even if they had no idea what that something was. But he couldn't convince them of anything if he wasn't there. Not that they were entirely discouraged. "Hi, everybody, I'm here, let's make bombs," Brian announced at one of the first meetings after John "resigned." It was clear that, whatever affection he felt for John, he would manage to survive without him. Gary would manage. Ed and Marlin would manage. And as for Rock, who hardly even knew John, Rock was always busy doing something—driving to Oregon, he said, to pick up chemicals, or helping Gary locate the right machine-gun parts, or Marlin an untraceable source of detonation cord. And now that he had prac-

"It was a party school."

tically replaced John, he had serious responsibilities himself, such as deciding which of the men were "hard-core" and "operational"—trustworthy enough to be invited to the militia's new headquarters. The Seattle Freemen, for instance, were by anyone's standards hard-core, but they were sometimes a little too casual with ordnance to be considered operational. (Once, when Rock went to collect some pipe bombs from a Freeman named John Kirk, he discovered that they'd been left for him in a shopping bag in Kirk's barbecue.) And none of the men really liked the Freemen. Fred, for one, thought that they were crazy—though it has to be said that by then Fred wasn't much interested in being operational himself. He was still smarting over his disgrace. When he wasn't plotting his revenge on Cathy Logg, he was plotting his revenge on John. Sometimes he got so mad thinking about John that he said he was ready to kill him—not just call him up, the way Marlin wanted to, and whisper *"I'm going to fucking kill you,"* but get him alone in the woods and wrap some wire around his neck and make him suffer, the way Fred himself was suffering. Gary, on the other hand, didn't see much point in killing John. He thought they should use John, the way he'd used them. "Play the game out, let him be the face out there that everybody gets to see, but he's never going to know what we're doing," he suggested, one night early in July. The men liked the part about John not knowing. They'd say "Need-to-know!" and start laughing—because if John wanted *their* intel he'd have to come up with intel of his own. The problem was that, by now, no one really believed he would. As Rock put it, they'd been screwed.

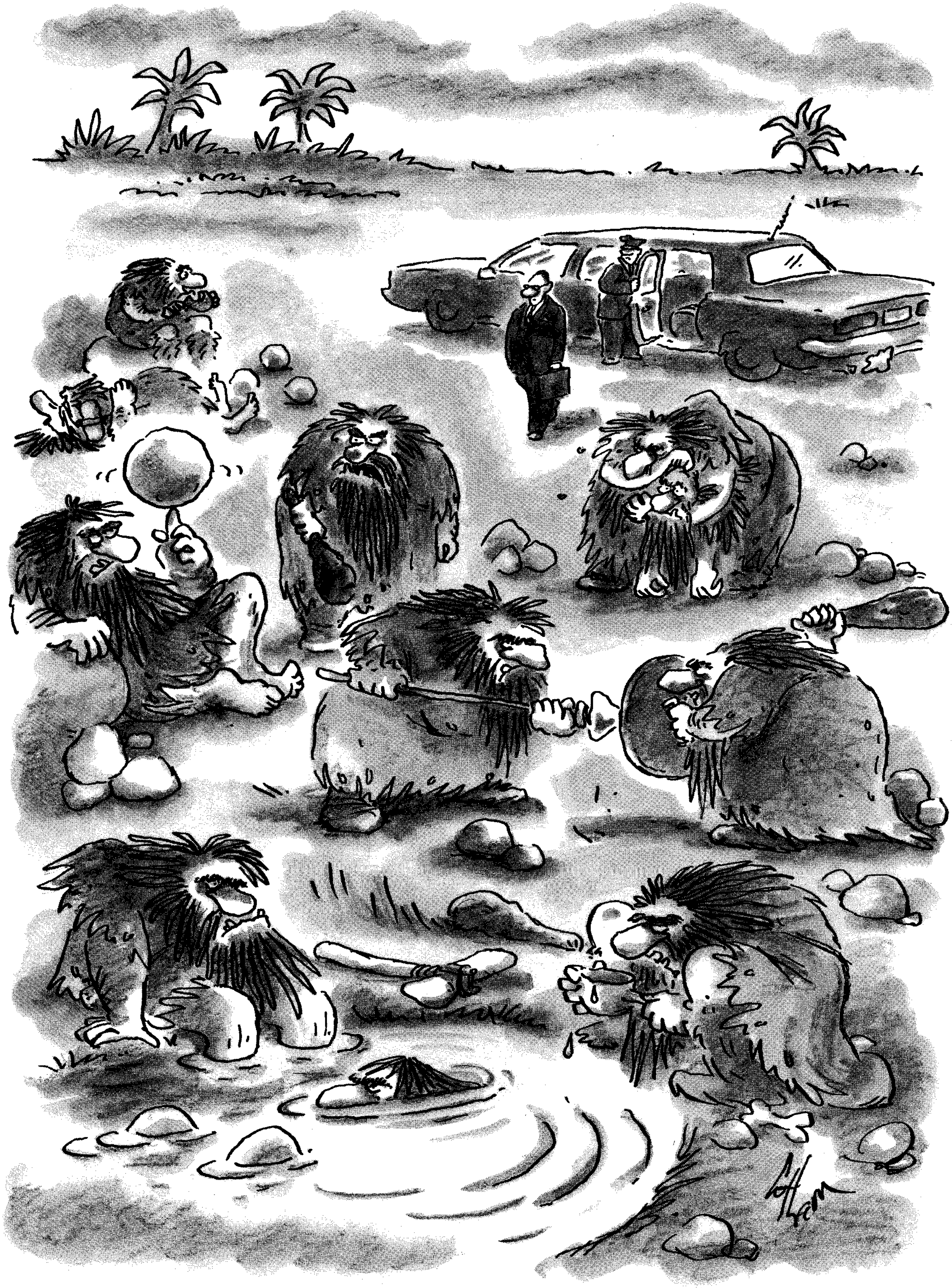
Every community has its own confessional form. Catholics go into a small booth. Evangelicals witness. The Inuits, in Alaska, often recount their sins or their crimes to a circle of neighbors, who chant something on the order of "We like you anyway." In the militia movement, where no one is entirely free from secrets, the form of choice has been a kind of collective inquisitorial raid on the man suspected of lying, cheating, stealing, spying, informing, or displaying an inadequate rejection of reality. You could compare it to a group of relatives bursting into the house of a troublesome cousin with a stash of empty gin bottles underneath the bed. In Alcoholics Anonymous, it is called an intervention, but in the Washington State Militia it was usually called "the hot seat."

On July 9, 1996, John was summoned to a meeting in Ed's garage. Most of the Alpha One regulars were there, and even a couple of men from Skagit who called themselves Alpha Three, but if John was shaken, walking unsuspecting into a crowd like that, he didn't show it. John, under pressure, gave one of his best performances. The first thing he said was "Are we reduced to meeting in garages now?" and the second thing was "I don't see a flag in here. I'm leaving. . . . Bad. No flag." The men were so surprised, or possibly so ashamed, that no one could think of an answer. Fred tried passing around a "resource list" he had put together, but John found something to criticize in that, too. He looked over Fred's list and said, "This isn't spell-checked." When Fred asked him about the weapons caches, he answered calmly, "There's some information that you're in possession of that you don't even know that you have. It's going to stay that way." And when Fred persisted, "See, that makes me really insecure," John explained why "not knowing" should be making Fred *more* secure, not less, because when Fred got captured and ended up with wires hooked to his teeth and his brain shot full of sodium pentothal he was going to talk. It was clear to John that if none of the men could understand that, then they hadn't understood anything he'd ever told them about how terrible the war was going to be.

Nothing seemed to rattle John that night. He always had an answer. Or it may be that he was so frightened in his hot seat he simply stopped hearing the menace in what was said. Not even Rock was able to break through his unnerving calm. Rock tried asking for his orders; he was the new guy and wanted to know what, specifically, he should do if the chain of command broke down. "There's other people who know where everything is, and I'm not going to sit here and tell you names," John said. He was sorry to disappoint the men, especially young Marlin (who'd been waiting so long for the enemy's tanks to come rolling into Whatcom County), but "it just hasn't worked out." In the end, the only thing the militiamen had learned from John was that they weren't going to learn anything at all. For a few minutes, he had even taken over his own hot-seat meeting, and anyone listening to him then would have had to admit that he sounded almost like his old self. He had fired questions at the men: What were those stories he'd heard about them renting a Bellingham office? He had made suggestions: There was a place in Deming that rented for half the price. He had given advice: Don't buy Chinese ammo; it was cheap but it got your gun dirty fast. He had even shared some intel: Did the men know about the Belgian troops shipping into Fort Lewis and Russian brass settling into condos near Mt. Baker? Never mind that it wasn't the intel they wanted, or that John himself hadn't "confessed" to anything. The most rueful thing he said, leaving to drive back to his empty house, was this: "There's *no* guarantees. When *you're* in a militia, your ass is whistling in the wind. . . . All we're doing is we're doing the best we can."

There wasn't really anything left to discuss then. A few of the men made desultory plans to get together later in the week and buy a metal detector and comb the land near Hannegan's Pass for their cache of combat rifles, but those were the ones who still believed that there *were* rifles. Most of the men had pretty much given up on John. They hoped he was scared—"I bet you he's fucking in his boots," Marlin said, and no one disputed that—and figured that he'd be leaving town that night, or the next morning at the latest. They assumed that he would head south, probably to his Freemen friends, looking for suckers, looking for sympathy, telling the Freemen that they were *all* moles up in Whatcom County. Some of the men still wanted to take John out, but there was really only one man smart enough to do it without getting arrested, or killed himself, and Rock didn't volunteer.

John called Debbie and said that it was time for him to "get the hell out of Dodge." He may have been ready to stand his ground in "the big battle," the way it said to do in the Second Amendment of the Constitution of the true



"Look sharp, everybody! Here comes the athletic director."

United States, but when it came to the small battles, the little mutinies of disappointed or misguided men, he preferred to take his potshots, leave Dodge, and save himself. By mid-July, he was hiding out at the house of an unsuspecting sister near Seattle, and when he drove home to meet the real-estate agent it's doubtful that even Debbie knew he was back. By Debbie's account, the first thing she knew it was Sunday the twenty-eighth, the phone rang, and the message was that John had been arrested. No one called Fred Fisher's wife. All *she* knew when the press got to her that Monday was that Fred had left for a "meeting" after a nice Saturday lunch, and that she hadn't seen him or heard from him since then. Fred's meeting turned out to have been an explosives class in the new headquarters, and Fred was arrested there, in the company of Marlin, Gary, John Kirk, and two other Seattle Freemen, at the same moment that Special Agent Catherine Fahey was crossing John's lawn.

The Washington State Militia got a lot of publicity in the course of those first few days, what with the news photos and the television clips of the defendants being led, in handcuffs and shackles, into Seattle's federal courthouse. But if you believed the gossip going around the Bellingham police station Fred and his friends were *already* in handcuffs when the Feds broke into their bomb class—making the rest something of an anticlimax. The story was that Rock Jackson, hoping to end the class with a small surprise, something to amuse the men, had decided to teach them a trick for getting out of locked handcuffs. They weren't suspicious, or even surprised, that Rock had thought to bring so many pairs of handcuffs to a class on bombs. Rock always came up with the right ordnance at the right time. They held out their hands, and that, supposedly, was how the Feds found them—neatly cuffed and waiting for Rock's instructions.

Rock himself went to his office, wrote his report, and eventually got a haircut. His real name was Michael Eric German, and his credentials as Mike German included a law degree from Northwestern, eight and a half years with the F.B.I., a talent for impersonation, and a very good track record at the Bureau's Boston headquarters, where he was posted when he got the assignment to go underground in Whatcom County. As for Ed Maeurer, who had been spirited away at some point during the bust, Ed turned out to be no one but himself. Ed was a paid informer, or, as the Bureau called him, a "coöperating witness." He had offered his services during a stint in the Whatcom County jail, figuring that the gossip he was picking up from the other prisoners might be worth something, maybe enough to start paying off the money he owed on his bad checks. It was more than enough. After a modest start, informing on some local gangsters, Ed joined the militia with an eye to extending his benefits. In no time, his reports on the "arsenal" in John's garage grew so extravagant that his handlers had to ask a judge for permission to wire him, just to corroborate the things he said.

The militia sting was the biggest news to hit Whatcom County since the environmentalists got the pasture on Jerald and Shirley Hardy's dairy farm classified as a habitat, and the Hardys had to stop culling their trees and grazing their cows near their own lake. Even John was impressed by the number of people who had spent their time trying to bring him down—not just federal agents and Bellingham policemen but, as the papers said, dozens of men and women from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Puget Sound Violent Crime Task Force, the King County Police Department, the Tukwila Police and Fire Department, the Fort Lewis Army Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit, and, of course, the Whatcom County sheriff's office.

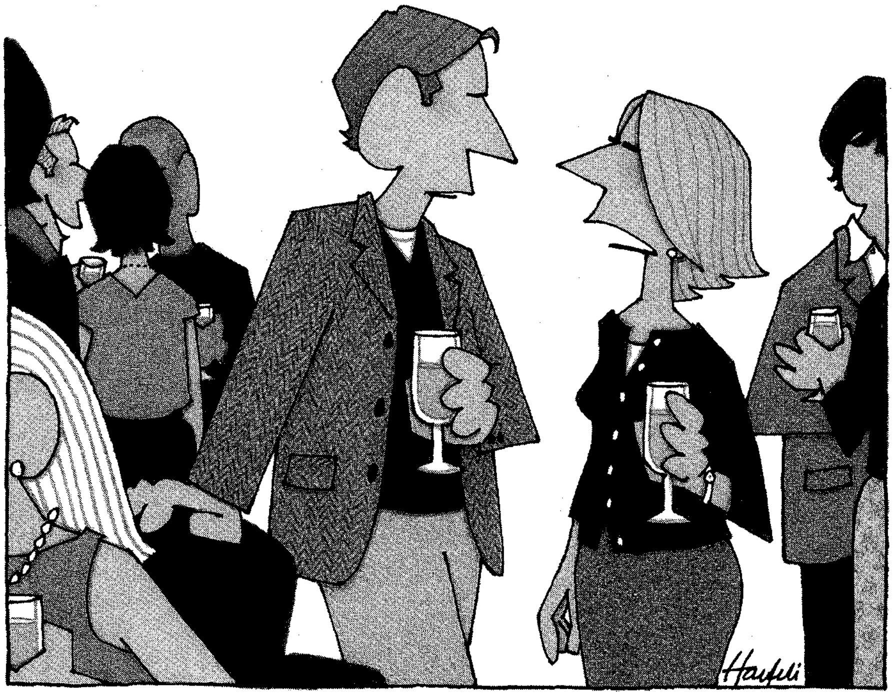
John, by law, had been allowed one phone call. He couldn't reach Debbie or Rachel, so he dialled a militiaman with an answering machine and left a message. But, whatever John had expected, militias across America did not go on "tac-4 alert." There was no war. Defending John Pitner turned out to be Debbie's job, and she went into action as soon as she heard the news, seeing to everything, never mentioning that they were separated. It may be that she had found her element—that she was even happy, talking for John without having to listen to John talk to her. She drove to the local television-news studio to plead his cause, so indignant that the manager had to tell her, "Hey, you weren't the one arrested!" She even got publicly turned

Victoria Roberts

"Go do something, honey. Then you can write in your journal."

away from a press conference at the Bellingham police station. On Monday, when she drove to Seattle for John's first hearing, she dismissed his court-appointed lawyer and got on the phone to find a better lawyer willing to take the case. The result was that two days after his arrest John found himself represented by a forty-two-year-old partner in a Seattle law firm with offices on the twenty-first floor of a glass tower, a suitably impressive view out over Elliot Bay, and nothing more incendiary in its waiting room than a book on Dutch marine painting of the seventeenth century. The lawyer's name was James Lobsenz, and his East Coast background was as far as you could get from Whatcom County. He had made his name with a couple of landmark death-row and gay-rights cases, and, with John, he may have been hoping for another kind of landmark. "It's sort of a paradox, me representing the head of the militia," he told me, that October, referring to the framed American Civil Liberties Union award hanging behind his desk, and to the Human Rights Day award from the Seattle chapter of the United Nations Association, and to the eight pages devoted to one of his cases in a book called "No Contest," co-written by Ralph Nader. He meant, of course, that it wasn't a paradox at all.

Charged in a conspiracy with friends like the Seattle Freemen, John was in many ways a civil libertarian's dream client. The case involved so many complicated and engaging issues: issues of free speech; issues of Second Amendment interpretation; issues of entrapment arising from the indisputable fact that the Feds had supplied not only the safe house but a good deal of the matériel that made their sting successful; and issues of conspiracy that, almost by definition, were difficult to prove or disprove. And the complications were exponential, when you considered that every defendant's brief was going to be different, with Lobsenz very likely making a First Amendment argument, and Marlin's lawyer a Second Amendment one, and Gary's lawyer arguing entrapment, and Fred's arguing that there was no conspiracy to begin with. On the other hand, from the prosecutors' perspective there was the issue of "clear and present danger"—at least, as it applied to a group of Patriot zealots who hadn't actually blown anything up but included the kind of people who kept bombs in the barbecue; zealots who hadn't harmed or killed anybody but talked about little else and, at the time of their arrest, were discussing how to kill their own leader and maybe even counting on an undercover agent of the F.B.I. to do it for them.



"I don't like to define myself by whose nanny I am."

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By the time of the trial, which began on January 15, 1997, there were five hundred and forty-six documents filling ten volumes in the case file, and so many superseding indictments that no one except the lawyers was really sure who would be charged with what until nine that morning. Outside Bellingham, the Washington State Militia had dropped off the front page, but John arrived at the courthouse optimistic, expecting to be cheered on by a big Patriot demonstration. If he was disappointed not to find one, he tried to be philosophical about it. "We decided to play it quiet," he told me. (In fact, the Patriots didn't have a permit.) The courtroom itself was full. It had split spontaneously, like a church at a wedding, with reporters and rights advocates and militia watchers on one side of the aisle and, on the other, a rogues' gallery of characters from Seattle's Patriot right, all of them furiously scribbling notes and leafing through papers. Most of the Patriots there looked too old, and too shifty, to hold down jobs that might have kept them away that day. But it was clear that they considered themselves reporters, too, and in a way they were, since if you added up the various newsletters and Web sites those Patriots ran or represented you would have to assume that they had *some* readers.

The trial was slow to start. The Freemen were not inclined to rise, as ordered, when the judge entered, because as far as they were concerned Judge John C. Coughenour had no authority to ask them to do anything. The Judge, who knew what was coming (it arrived in February, in the form of a $1.76-billion sovereign citizens' lien), sat down looking as if he had a very unpleasant headache. The one time I saw him smile, in nearly a month at the trial, was the day he fined Gary's lawyer twenty-five dollars for being late and told him to send the check to the A.C.L.U. I never saw the two federal prosecutors smile. They seemed to me to regard everybody in the courtroom, from the militiamen and their whispering friends to the jury and

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"The boos I can handle. It's the silence of the educated fans that rankles."

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the journalists, as interlopers. In the event, they refused to talk to me.

For John, on the other hand, the trial was a taste of freedom, like shore leave after months at sea. He talked about Lobsenz as "my friend Jim," and was sure it meant something that they both knew the lyrics to the song that started "Where, oh where, can my baby be?" And he liked sitting at the bar at Tulio's, up the street from the courthouse, eating salads and drinking coffee and then joking with the barman about his "nervous stomach." Two months earlier—when he made bail and was placed under house arrest with the sister who had taken him in that summer and was the only relative willing to supervise him now—I had asked him whether he hated his men, given the rumors that they'd planned to kill him, and he had shaken his head and said, "The Christian side of me tries not to, but the other side of me . . ." Now he forgave them all. He knew that Fred was basically a "good man," who had never really meant to hurt him. He knew that "young Marlin" was a good man, too, and would still be home in Bellingham, doing right by his country, if Mike German hadn't picked him out as the impressionable one, the kid to work on. And as for Gary, there was never any doubt in John's mind that Gary was his faithful friend—next to Brian, his best friend.

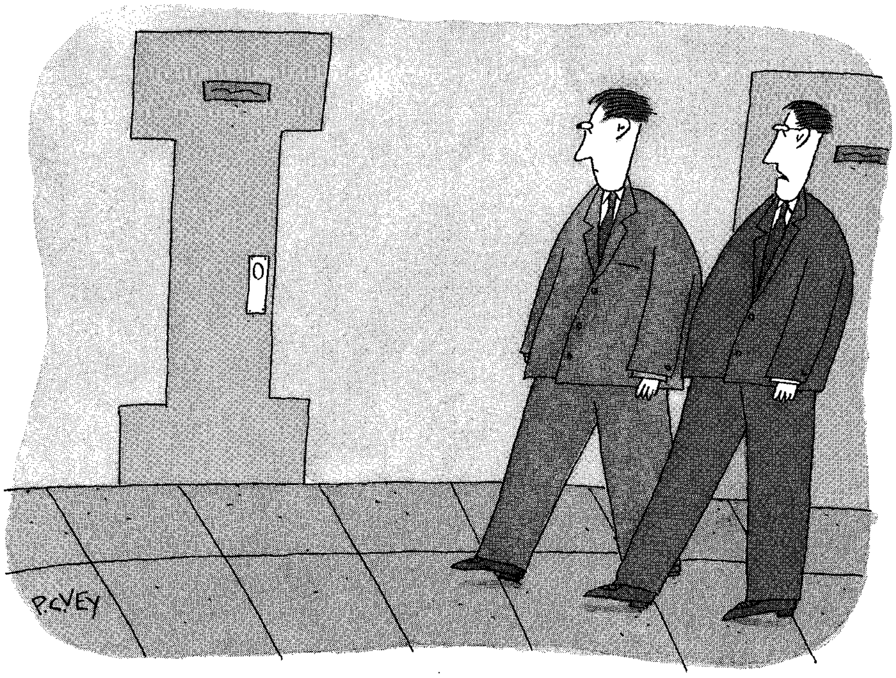
When John was talking about his men, worrying about them all, he was almost cheerful. He became expansive and, in his own way, confidential, though of course it was impossible to tell how much truth any of his confidences carried. He wanted me to know how often he had tried to persuade the men to let me into their secret meetings. Ed had always been against it (which hardly surprised me now), and then "Uriel had a problem with it." Uriel was his latest name for the "superior" he called "my plug into Fort Lewis." He "was active military, he was pretty guarded," as John described him. And he'd been squarely behind John on the matter of need-to-know and the buried ordnance—though John had begun to revise that story, too. There wasn't really much ordnance, he said now. There was "the *idea*" of ordnance. His men had needed that idea. "They figured, 'We don't have nothing—nothing to protect ourselves with,'" John told me. "So I said, 'You've got hundreds of pounds of dynamite, hand grenades, thousands of rounds of ammunition.'" They wanted land mines; John told them they already had land mines. They wanted Claymores; John said Claymores. Of course, that wasn't the only thing John had lied about to them. The men thought they had paid for weapons, not for the idea of weapons, and John wasn't going to talk about where their money had gone. John wasn't on trial as a confidence man. There was even the possibility that he was lying now about lying. In the end, his most spectacular sleights were sleights of logic. He argued his innocence to me by insisting, "If I was truly the person [Ed] said I was, I'd have had him killed."

It was the unravelling of his inventions, day by day in Judge Coughenour's courtroom, that finally got to John. He could sit calmly, almost abstracted, while Jim Lobsenz told the jury that "odd as this might sound to you"—meaning to a fairly reasonable person—John Pitner actually believed that the United States was going to be invaded by the United Nations. He could listen to the courtroom titter because John Pitner thought that his own backwater county was the "first line of defense" against the New World Order and that it was up to him to save it. He could listen to the shaming things that John Pitner had said about his wife, the lies he'd told, and the language he'd used, and the whining monologues of his self-regard. He could sit through it all, taking notes and occasionally shaking his head, or smirking, or sighing in a knowing way. But he could not easily listen to anything suggesting that the men of the Washington State Militia hadn't entirely bought into the hero called John Pitner, that they had told jokes about his stories and, in the end, spent most of their time debating whether *any* of them were true. When he heard their conversations—on the F.B.I. tapes and videos that were entered as evidence at the trial—he would turn red and hang his head and shrink into his new clothes.

The jury was out for seven days. There were problems with one juror, a Muslim who refused to take part in the deliberations or, for that matter, to follow any of Judge Coughenour's other instructions. And the result was that on February 28th, the day the verdicts were read, the Judge had no choice but to declare a mistrial on all the conspiracy charges—which, in effect, had held the men responsible for one another's crimes—as well as on four separate charges involving Gary Kuehnoel and John Kirk and his wife, Judy, who had also been arrested. The decision left Fred Fisher, Judy Kirk, and one of the Freemen with no convictions against them. Marlin Mack was found guilty on seven counts of "possession of an unregistered destructive device," and returned to jail to await sentencing. John Kirk went back to jail, guilty on one count of the same charge. Gary was found guilty on one count of "possession of a machine gun," and acquitted on three counts involving possession of unregistered firearms. John Pitner was found guilty on one count of "possession and transfer of a machine gun," and swore he was innocent, because the "automatic" he was said to have offered Ed Maeurer—the jury had heard a blurry tape of their conversation—wasn't an Uzi at all, as the prosecution claimed, but a pickup, with automatic transmission. He'd assured me of that on the day the tape was played. He said I could ask anyone who knew him: John Pitner preferred automatic to shift. In the end, it didn't much matter what kind of car John liked driving. He was a prisoner for the next four years.

By the time John was released, in January of 2001, he had been retried for conspiracy, along with one of the Seattle Freemen, convicted, and sentenced to time served. (He appealed last winter; a decision is still pending.) His militia had officially disbanded. But, of course, that didn't necessarily mean that militiamen had disappeared from Whatcom County. It meant that whoever was left was serious. Nothing about hate has changed. There are still, by most estimates, between three and four million Patriots in the country—men and women who believe themselves victims, real or intended, of an international plot to destroy their freedom and their faith and pollute their blood—and, inasmuch as they consider the government of the United States party to this plot, they have exempted themselves from many, and in some cases all, of the inconveniences of citizenship, including the laws that make it a crime to murder the people they resent. Psychiatrists claim that groups like the Washington State Militia can have, at least in theory, a socializing function, that they can discipline paranoia, and by extension paranoiacs, by focussing on a delusion that everyone in the group shares—that they can set perimeters on delusion and thus permit some otherwise dangerously capricious people to live at least part of their lives as harmless and even useful citizens. John had more or less told me the same thing. I used to wonder if he was right—if apart from his own evident delusion he was actually quite shrewd. The question that haunts me now, in a very changed world, is this: Was it the militia that kept John from terrorism, or simply the fact that he wasn't shrewd enough, or smart enough or organized enough or rich enough, to do some of the things he dreamed of?

A few weeks before his first conviction, we were at the bar in Tulio's, talking about the New World Order. John wanted me to know that, whatever happened, he bore no grudges, because when you came down to it everyone was a victim. When he thought about all the effort that had been made just to arrest him, all the taxpayers' money that had been spent—right down to the "speech processors" that could cut the words "pickup" and "shift" out of a friendly business conversation—he was more convinced than ever that in the next few months we would be at war. He wanted the good Americans to know that, wherever he was then, they were welcome to join him. Racists could join him. Blacks could join him. Even Chicanos—he didn't really like Chicanos; one of them had stabbed his brother—could join him. He didn't discriminate. "Getting the message out is more important than my personal differences," he told me. "If you get a piece of information out to two or three people—that's lifting the rock and letting the sun in." ♦



"That's our idea department—the door was one of their ideas."

FICTION

THE PRIOR'S ROOM

BY ANDREA LEE

Anna Meehan, an American girl seated at lunch with a French father and son, is basking in this common but blissful discovery: what happens sometimes, when you disobey your mother, is that the world turns inside out. She hasn't specifically disobeyed—her mother, still asleep across the Atlantic in Rose Tree, Pennsylvania, never forbade her to take off from her summer language program with five minutes' notice to join a Parisian boy she's barely met at an Alpine resort—yet she knows that every parent on the planet would be opposed to the idea, including the Swiss surrogates who patrol her dormitory at the Cours d'Été of the University of Lausanne.

Anna is a recent high-school graduate with honors, bound in September for a college with a renowned department of Romance languages. She is also the youngest of three pretty sisters, each of whom displays a different striking conjunction of the traits of their mother's part-Filipino family and their father's Irish-and-Polish clan. So pretty is Anna and so ingenuous does she seem that her Rosales grandparents shied away from giving her a postgraduation summer in Paris and, instead, sent her to polish her French in tamer surroundings. She's been bored silly in Switzerland, and now that she has kicked over the traces she wonders what took her so long. It was shockingly easy: she accepted a telephone invitation, and now she sits on the other side of the French border, the cynosure of a table glittering with crystal and heavy silver, with a galaxy of waiters hovering and a pair of well-dressed foreign men offering her highly detailed compliments as if they were choice hors d'oeuvres. Revelation has followed revelation: her freckles, for instance, which her hosts say they find seductive. Who would have guessed that the commonplace inscription in brown spots over the bridge of her nose could be subtitled as the gorgeously sibilant, the rich and strange *taches de rousseur*? *Taches*, she knows, means "stains"—a vague flavor of Lady Macbeth that only makes the translation more delectable.

Another revelation is the restaurant around her: a three-star shrine on the shores of the Lac d'Annecy. It is about one o'clock on a Saturday afternoon at the end of August, and outside the panoramic windows a merciless late-summer sun illuminates the double blue of lake and sky around the bare peaks and pastures of the Savoy region; by contrast, the smoky air in the panelled, upholstered dining room filled with vacationing Europeans is like a bouillon of civilization, a concentrated essence. She will recall it, much later in her life, as Paradise—a standard by which sensual well-being will be measured forever afterward, stamped indelibly in her heart as she sips a house cocktail called Le Lac, a blue curaçao confection that through some casual triumph of artifice exactly reproduces the dominant color of the scene outside.

Anna is no bumpkin: she and her sisters have been dragged thriftily around the capitals of Europe by their parents, a pair of academics who have always displayed the proper American reverence for garlic and old stones, and occasionally even sprung for a fancy meal. And she recognizes the setting from the half-dozen films that have formed part of the prolonged and expensive process of establishing in her soul a small outpost of French culture. She recalls one film in particular: a summer resort, cherry trees, bored men, beautiful neurasthenic women, a tantalizing hint of obsession. Now, suddenly, it is as if she had stepped into the film, as if all those years of conjugating irregular verbs within the excellent Rose Tree Media School District had been preparation for this moment—yes, this very moment, as she holds her blue drink and lifts her eighteen-year-old face to the older Frenchman, whose experienced eye and extravagant praise suggest a wealthy amateur horticulturalist admiring a prize bloom.

Only her clothes, Anna knows, are wrong. She is wearing a pair of heavy tights she uses for ballet, a denim skirt, a tank top, and a pair of sensible Bass sandals that her mother insisted she buy at Campus Corner before she left home. It is the late nineteen-seventies, and the other girls and women in the restaurant are all exquisitely dressed in sweeping flowered skirts or elegant tight pants, and sandals or even summer boots with towering heels. When she got out of the taxi this morning, there was a perceptible wince on the part of father and son as they caught sight of her outfit. They are both wearing immaculate jeans and sports jackets, with pale cashmere sweaters thrown over their shoulders. The older man, whose name is Olivier, is at the age that to Anna is simply how old parents and teachers are. He is small and paunchy but strangely emphatic, with a round flat face, a pointed nose, bright green-brown eyes, and wispy colorless hair cut in a precise fringe across his forehead. The son, nineteen years old and much taller, is called Étienne, and he is flat-faced like his father but with a protruding Adam's apple and blue eyes and a sheeplike tangle of fair curls that she found unattractive when they first met, a few weeks ago, on the flight from Newark to Geneva. At the back of the plane, near the toilets, they talked for twenty minutes in unoccupied seats, and then, after they had exchanged phone numbers, he annoyed her by trying to kiss her, an attempt she thwarted with an expert but not unfriendly shove.

She forgot all about him in the bustle of arrival, of settling into the pro-

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gram in Lausanne: the criminally dull classes in a Calvinist-gray building; the hikes straight out of Scout camp, punctuated with hearty choruses of "Chevaliers de la Table Ronde"; the cookouts with veal sausages from Migros supermarket; the excursions to Ouchy and the Château de Chillon; the dawning realization that she was still just an American in a mass of Americans, and that Europe was somewhere else. Until this morning, when her roommate Sarah, from Pittsfield, Massachusetts, yelled to her that she had a call, and she held the smooth, heavy receiver and found that it was not her parents or her jealous boyfriend. Instead, it was a voice speaking French, and sounding far more attractive than it had on the plane. Hello, hello, the boy said. We are near you—my father and I. We are at the most beautiful place for the weekend, just across the mountains. Will you join us? Please!

Anna giggled into the phone—her French acquiring a sudden fluency that had eluded her in her classes—that she had no way of getting there, whereupon he said, quite matter-of-factly, Well, take a taxi. He meant, she realized, take

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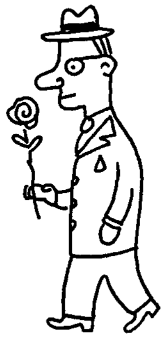
a taxi over the mountains and across the border into France.

And after that began a sustained act of nerve. A string of decisions in which Anna was more absolutely alone than she had ever been—even in the spring semester of her junior year, when she used to tell all those lies about dentist visits so that she could spend long afternoons in the back of Mark Florio's van. Saying nothing to her roommates, she brushed her hair until it shone, washed her face, and tossed a pair of underpants, her birth-control pills, her passport, and all the money she had into an Indian shoulder bag printed with elephants. Then she left the dreary dormitory, with its cramped steel balconies and scanty fringe of pines, and walked down to the train station, where in the lineup of taxis she located a driver who didn't look as if he would rape and abandon her in the middle of the Alps. Instinctively, she knew what to do. She gave the directions in a tone that she hoped sounded like that of someone used to casual international taxi trips of an hour or two, and kept her spine straight and her chin up in the back seat, as the taxi wound up and down high passes and through tunnels, and the landscape became more desolate and glorious. She tried not to imagine what would happen if the French boy didn't pay the fare that was mounting so alarmingly on the meter; if it were all a practical joke and the taxi-driver never found the small lakeside village and hotel whose names she'd scribbled on a piece of paper; what her mother—tiny and fragile but nicknamed the Enforcer by her daughters—would say, crackling furiously over long-distance lines, when she found out that Anna had squandered three weeks' worth of traveller's checks on a taxi ride. As they raced past vineyards and geranium-bedecked villages, Anna sat mentally counting the cash she had and wondering whether the driver would take her watch and Eurail pass and the diamond-stud earrings she had been given for graduation.

Then, suddenly, it was over: the taxi pulled up in front of a hotel, in a cobblestoned courtyard with an old well and clipped golden trees, the lake a jewel in the background, so different from Lake Geneva. And the tall blond boy was there, eagerly opening the car door, and the small father wafted the driver and her terror away with a fistful of francs. She had arrived where she was meant to be, where she had been heading all her life. And though they winced at her clothes, they were immediately complimentary. Ravishing, the father said, clapping his son on the back as if they had settled a bet. Very American, as you said, but with something more. He made a rectangle with the fingers and thumbs of both hands and peered through it as if through a camera. A very definite something, he added.

Now, at lunch, they even praise Anna for her good appetite, as if eating were somehow a rare talent. Eating course after extraordinary course with flavors intensified by their incantatory names: *feuillantine d'escargots à l'achillée et pimprenelle; rissoles de poires aux fruits secs et sabayon.* And wines: Chignin-Bergeron, Mondeuse. And coffee, and a plate of little squashy pastries that she wants to snatch and stuff into her elephant bag. She devours them and the chocolate truffles that follow, taking fewer than she'd like, forcing herself for the sake of decency to pause between each one. She tries an old liqueur from a bottle with spidery writing on the label, and it gives her throat a hot glazed feeling as she listens to the father talk about politics. There has been an election, an important one, and he has had something to do with it. It doesn't interest Anna, but it gives resonance to the cloud of language around her, gives her the sense that she has stepped into a realm where high deeds are performed by grave men in dark ambassadorial suits, and the fates of nations decided.

When the father sees her straining to look attentive, he immediately stops talking about politics and switches back to compliments. How small her wrists



are; how instinctively well she chose her food; what a wonderful university she will attend next fall—yes, he knows the name; who does not?—how remarkable that she speaks French with such ease and can even recognize a reference to Mallarmé: *le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui*. The son says little, staring at both his father and Anna. Occasionally he shows off by speaking in stilted nasal English. The father asks about Anna's family and laughs as she describes her sisters: Barb the saint, who is playing the guitar on a Catholic youth tour this summer; Becca the slut, with her secret tattoo, whose boyfriends always end up going after Anna. Described in French they sound somehow fascinating, not boring or sleazy at all. Three beautiful sisters, the father laughs. Like something out of the Brothers Grimm.

The restaurant is a short walk from the hotel, and they stroll back in the dazzling sunlight as speedboats drone far out on the water. The hotel is a low ivy-covered building that wraps around the courtyard where the taxi arrived. It has small arched windows set deep in stone, and palm trees in pots, and an air of fitting the spot where it sits between the village and the lake promenade as a diamond fits the setting of a ring. It is called the Clos Saint Barthélemy and was once, the father says, a Benedictine abbey, built by the monks expelled from Geneva during the Reformation. Anna pays little attention to this, because as they walk the son is squeezing her hand. She feels tipsy and reckless, her head swelled like a balloon by all the homage. She is drawn to this boy, whom she had judged dull and strange-looking earlier, but who now seems like one of the lords of the earth.

It is unclear what is going to happen. Three in the afternoon after an epic meal: obviously time for a rest. They talk of this in the hotel lobby, another oasis of polished wood and mandarin-faced servitors. The father—Anna has begun to call him Olivier, though she continues to address him with a formal *vous*—proposes with some hesitancy that she spend the rest of the day and the night there at the lake, and that the next day he and his son will make a detour from their drive to Paris and take her back to Lausanne. The hesitancy, she realizes, in one of her few accurate feats of perception all day, is because Olivier is suddenly faced with an ironclad obligation: he must treat her as the proper young girl he has, despite all her efforts, understood her to be. An image she wants to toss aside completely. From a very early age, for all her angelic looks, Anna has on occasion displayed a calm, almost casual inclination to step far outside the usual limits, a trait that has alarmed her sisters—even Becca the slut—and boyfriends alike. It's at work now: at this point she would agree to anything, from more wine and compliments to stripping naked and celebrating a Black Mass.

Of course, she says impatiently, she will stay. At this the son, with his sheep's face and curls, puts his arm around her and kisses her cheek with a ceremonious air, as if she were a cherished young bride. And the father spreads his arms in a delicate sketch of an embrace that includes them both, and says, in a magnanimous paternal tone, So, children. You would like a room; *cela saute aux yeux*. You can have the special one I reserved. It is such a rarity that it even has a name—La Chambre du Prieur—and I do hope you will appreciate it. He asks for Anna's passport and goes to the desk to reserve another room for himself and inform them that mademoiselle will be staying.

In the elevator, Anna kisses the son, Étienne. It's not as glorious a kiss as it should be: his lips and tongue feel oddly wooden. But none of that matters when he leads her down a hall to a door with a gold handle—the key swings from a fat silk tassel—which opens to reveal a wonderful room, a room that is like a chapel, a cave whose walls and ceilings are covered with a swarm of painted figures. Amber, red, blue, green, both sombre and resplendent. Frescoes of saints and angels and Biblical throngs, curling vines and dim gilded fruit running in and out of the hollows of a coffered ceiling. Deep red rugs, a bed with a velvet canopy and cover, old panelling shining with wax. This is the room where the Prior—a rather sybaritic prior—ran the affairs of the old abbey hundreds of years ago. The sumptuous apparition takes Anna by surprise, and for a second she is unable to speak. It is the first time that she

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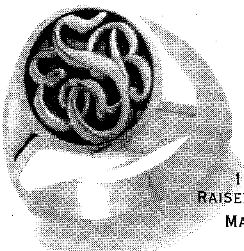

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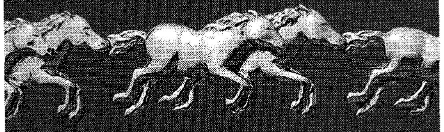

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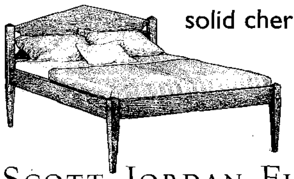

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has been in a room of such splendor without a museum rope to keep her from touching things. This is the first time, actually, that she has even been in a hotel room not paid for by her parents. But she quickly rises to the occasion, as she has been doing all day. She feels, in fact, that she was born to rise to such occasions.

She and Étienne stand by the window; they kiss, they kiss more, and then they undress clumsily and make love in haste, yanking back the velvet cover on the bed and flinging themselves on heavy linen sheets knobby with embroidery. Anna doesn't enjoy it much, except as an appropriate element of the intoxication of the day, the frantic sense of life converging at the place where she is. She liked the pastries at lunch more. She thinks briefly about her boyfriend and the other boys back home, about wilder times in places that were sometimes awful and uncomfortable. But one thing she enjoys: how beautiful the two of them are, naked, in the beautiful room, how they complete it. The French boy has hairless pink skin more delicate than her own. After each orgasm his chest remains mottled for a long time with a bright-red flush. His penis is pink and large, though it seems somehow childish to her, a novelty because it is uncircumcised. In bed, he gives up the stilted English he is so proud of and talks to her in French. Away from his father, he is more commanding: he comments knowledgeably on her body and its loveliness, with finicky precision spreads her open, makes her display herself to him.

They exchange life stories. She tells him about the taunts she and her sisters endured growing up in a mixed-race family in the suburbs. He tells her about the taunts he endured as a boy, in a provincial town in the Ile-de-France, because his parents had never married. Curiously enough, these confidences don't make them feel closer; instead, they thicken the peculiar mist between them that might be called "glamour"—the opacity that makes them more attractive to each other. He tells her how his father, who left the provinces and got rich doing something with newspapers and politicians, took him off to Paris at age seventeen to be an apprentice at *Le Figaro*. He brags about the trips he takes to Dakar and Marrakech, and describes an extravagant and disorderly bachelor life in Paris. Eventually, he tells her that he loves her. She trembles and embraces him tightly at this, not because she is moved but because she wants to shake off the tepidness of her own response, to quash a tiny commonsensical voice in the back of her mind which remarks that he must be slightly feebleminded to blurt it out like that. In a tone whose decisiveness, although she does not know it, exactly resembles that of her mother, the Enforcer, Anna says that she loves him, too. In French, which makes it sound so different, so much more important.

They fall asleep and wake up and then sleep again, and after a while it is like being bound and gagged in silk. She is aware only of a series of isolated flashes: his rough curly head, the sound of a horn from the lake, the mineral water they gulp down, the soreness between her legs when she splashes awkwardly in the bidet, how in the deepening light the figures in the frescoes seem to lean out of the walls.

At six o'clock, Étienne says that they should go and join his father. They dress, and he says, You know, I'd like to buy you some nicer underwear. Like French girls wear. White, blue, with lace. He doesn't let her put on her clumsy skirt and tights. He says, Here, wear my jeans. I have another pair with me. Now you look gorgeous. Like a French girl. She lets him zip the jeans up, as if he were a lady's maid. They are heavy denim, completely different from American jeans, and they hang loosely but handsomely on her slender hips. By the way, he says as he opens his bag, My father is a misogynist—do you know what that is? He dislikes women, but he really seems to admire you. Not like most of the girls I introduce to him. Isn't that lucky?

Anna is studying herself within the tessellated gilt frame of a mirror. Complete, as if in an old portrait, she sees a girl in French jeans, her long hair in place, her *taches de rousseur*, her mascara-smudged eyes, and she doesn't answer, because he doesn't seem to expect a reply.

Then they go downstairs and through the lobby, feeling the hotel staff and the well-dressed loiterers watching, observing with approval because the two of them are young and handsome and have clearly been in bed all afternoon. Anna thinks back to an Elizabethan poem she studied in A.P. English the previous fall, in which the poet describes the circles within circles of creation: Heaven, nature, the newly discovered continents, all of civilization revolving around a pair of lovers on a bed. This was what the painted bedroom, the famous restaurant, the omniscient faces of the concierge and the maître d', the mountains and the lake were created for—as a setting for the small naked object that she and this boy make when they are joined together.

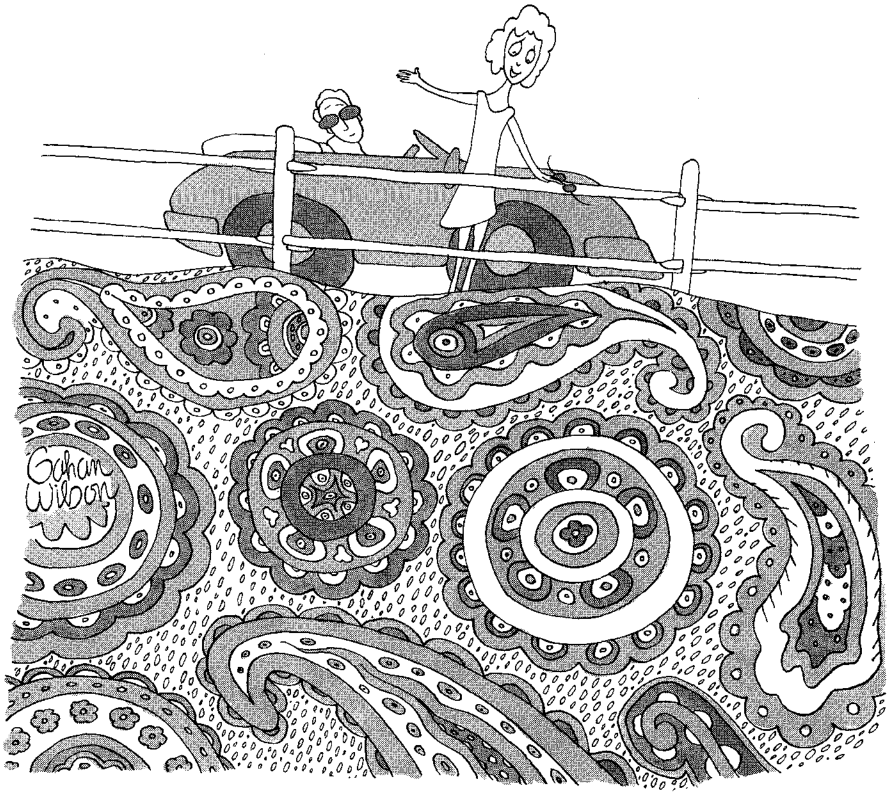
Étienne is behaving like a proper boyfriend now; he wears a stunned expression of bliss while he strolls with his arm tight around her. The sun is beginning to set as they enter the village and pass into a small square where they find his father sitting in a café. Beside him, smiling, is a swarthy young man in a khaki military uniform, who seems hardly older than Étienne. Both the young man and Olivier are drinking glasses of something cloudy, and they are chatting so merrily and confidingly as Anna and Étienne arrive that Anna supposes the soldier must be a family friend, encountered by chance. But no—Olivier introduces him as Paul, and says that he met him a half hour ago, when Paul's platoon band gave a Saturday-afternoon concert. Paul played the trombone. And I could see he was a very promising young man, Olivier says, in a teasing voice. Paul the soldier turns red at this. He looks as if he might be part Turkish or Algerian, with a melon-shaped head on which his shaved hair makes a bluish shadow, round olive cheeks, jug ears, and a pair of melting brown eyes with bizarrely long eyelashes.

Anna and Étienne sit down at the table and order two more of the cloudy drinks. It is Anna's first Pernod: with the ghostly licorice taste in her mouth she feels as if she were living in the pages of her sixth-grade French textbook, where Monsieur LeBrun meets Monsieur LeBlanc *pour l'apéritif.* Étienne acts satisfyingly infatuated, and keeps staring at her, playing with her hands, praising the way she looks in his jeans. The lake is red in the glow from behind the mountains, and elegant people are walking by and sitting around them. Anna spots a tall woman with gold hair piled in a rigid construction of knobs on the back of her head, and a pink suit trimmed in white leather. The woman is intensely beautiful in an adult way that Anna has never seen back home, and Anna announces that she wants to look like that when she's older.

You will if you want to, Olivier says. But you have to be at least forty, and you have to know certain things, to be beautiful like that. His eyes cross Anna's and offer a momentary bland challenge, which for the first time that day gives her the sensation of danger.

The atmosphere has shifted now that the soldier is there. Anna did not expect to step into Paradise when she took the taxi across the mountains, but she quickly got used to it. These people were complete strangers, but they offered her instant worship. Greedily, she expected it to continue. But the focus has changed, and not because of Étienne but because of his father. As at lunch, Olivier sits at the table offering a constant stream of sophisticated compliments—but they are all for the round-faced, jug-eared, red-cheeked soldier. Paul, it seems, is a handsome boy, an extraordinary boy, an intelligent boy, even a brilliant boy. All this is observed in the older man's cool voice, as he smokes cigarette after cigarette. He pauses once to eye his son and Anna benevolently. Ah, one can tell that the children had a very good time this afternoon. There is that slight flush, that delicate, weary bloom. Did you like La Chambre du Prieur, my dears?

All through dinner, which they eat at the hotel—in another grand restaurant, filled with rich weekenders and foie gras and syrupy golden light—it is the same thing, the almost suffocating string of compliments directed at the soldier, who continues to blush and duck his head. Anna knows from books and films that men make love to other men, but this is more like a complicated game whose rules she doesn't understand. Words like "innuendo" drift through her mind, though the older man is quite straightforward about what he is doing. She studies Olivier, who seems ageless in his jeans and soft sweater and jacket; the skin of his face full and radiant, his nose as pointed as Pinocchio's, his moss-green eyes somehow sad and querulous, even when his voice is at its most caressing. The flattery intensi-



"It's a whole field of paisley!"

F.D.N.Y.
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Levin

"And that's why we wear red suspenders."

fies, becomes almost Baroque, and it is as if the older man were amusing himself at the expense of the three young people sitting around him, even though he keeps his gaze fixed, with precise intent, on the soldier. As for his son, Étienne, he has fallen by the wayside: he continues to talk charmingly to Anna both in English and in French, to gaze at her, to caress her knees under the table, but at the same time she can feel a careful blankness in his manner, a deliberate unseeing aimed in his father's direction. Anna orders curried soup and guinea hen cooked with wild mushrooms; she eats caramelized pineapple and drinks verbena tea. For this last she is praised by father and son—We think a girl who drinks a tisane after dinner is very refined—but it is clear that no clever thing she does will make her the star of the show again.

She and Étienne excuse themselves finally, but Olivier says jovially that he thinks he'll stay downstairs in the bar to chat with his new soldier friend. He rises and gives his son and Anna a warm kiss on each cheek, and Anna for an instant has an urge to slap his face. Only much later in her life will she ask herself whether she had expected him to make love to her, too. Right now she feels toward Olivier the kind of furious disappointment that up to this moment she has felt only when very angry at her parents. As for the interloping soldier, Paul, she can't even look at him; he might give her a familiar smirk or a wink of complicity, and that would be unbearable.

Upstairs, in the Prior's Room, the curtains have been drawn and the bed turned down for the night. And once more between the linen sheets she and Étienne hold each other like fretful children. Anna feels stuffed and queasy from all the eating and drinking, and sore from making love too much. Also, she is suddenly sick of Étienne, of his blond smell that is infantile and a little off, like week-old milk, of the fact that he is the only reason she has for being here in this magnificent room. She can't see her watch, but she knows it is too early or too late to leave. The windows are shuttered tight in the European way, the way they do it back at her dormitory. She is a prisoner here for the night, in a luxury cell. She thinks with nostalgia of her roommates in Lausanne, who have no doubt spent the weekend visiting the public pool, sipping bad beer in the tourist bars down at Ouchy, dancing with South Americans at the horrible student discothèque, Le Treizième Siècle. She is having the adventure that all those daydreaming American girls long for, and it has consumed her, left behind only this small point of alien consciousness, alight in a vigil amid the mountains, the past, the Old Country.

It is probable that Étienne feels sick of her, too. They have made love in every possible position. He has described to her what hard work it was, back in Paris, introducing his ex-girlfriend to oral sex; confided that he thinks he got a Spanish girl pregnant on a vacation in the Balearics, and that he has to perform a ritual act of masturbation every night before going to sleep. With the air of passing on great chunks of wisdom, he has even entrusted to her several crackpot theories about America—that the wrong side won the Civil War, for one—and he has praised bad American movies and horrendous rock and roll that nobody Anna knows would be caught dead listening to. And Anna, instead of bursting out laughing and telling him that he is full of shit, as she would have done with any boy back home, has listened with solemn attention.

Now they lie in a halfhearted embrace, neither sleeping nor talking, until Étienne moves his legs restlessly and complains of a stomach ache. It was the fish, perhaps, he opines, in a way that Anna doesn't yet know is very Gallic. My father has something for an upset stomach. I should go and ask him. I'll just pull on some clothes. Étienne sits up in bed, his pink muscular shoulders looking as new as those of a plastic doll against the lamplight. He swings his legs out of the bed. But then he pauses and looks for an instant back over his shoulder at Anna. There is no expression at all in his round blue eyes. *Non, je ne vais pas*, he says. I won't go. I'd wake him. He wouldn't mind, of course, but— He breaks off, and Anna can clearly picture the melon-shaped head of Paul the soldier, with his smudge of shaved hair and preposterous eyelashes. The steadfast tin soldier, she thinks for some reason, and for a moment she feels sorry for Étienne. He slowly gets back into bed, and there is nothing for the two of them to do but make love again, which they do without any pretense of tenderness until Anna feels scraped raw. Afterward, though, she sleeps so soundly that even a summer storm over the lake barely disturbs her.

Sunday morning they awaken late, and then eat a huge breakfast, naked, at the window overlooking the lake, which lies flat under a newly washed sky as church bells resound from the mountain villages. Things are wonderful again. Étienne shows Anna how to sip her chocolate through a lump of sugar, and she piles her bread with a half-inch layer of butter that has an elusively fresh taste, like pastures, a taste she can't get enough of. She just has to gobble it and gobble it. She thinks it is the best breakfast she has ever had, and the taste is sharpened by regret because they have to dress and go. Étienne makes her a present of the jeans, and she privately vows not to wash them for the rest of the summer. Then they leave the room and go down to meet Olivier, who is sitting alone reading *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*. He is impeccably brushed and shaved and cheerful, dressed this morning in moleskin trousers and yet another handsome sweater. *Et voici les enfants*, he says, with a real look of pleasure at the sight of them. Fresh from your honeymoon. There is no sign and no mention made of Paul. Anna, smiling forgiveness at Olivier, can almost believe that the soldier was only a ghost, perhaps a figure from the Prior's Room who had stepped out of a painting in the night and vanished at sunrise.

They get into the car, a large shining sedan delivered reverently to them by the hotel attendant. And swaddled in the scent of leather they head over the mountains toward Lausanne and her student life. She and Étienne sit in the back seat—Olivier makes a half-serious complaint about having to play chauffeur—and kiss. All at once, she feels madly in love. Below them, the Lac d'Annecy is getting smaller. Étienne quotes yet another terrible American rock song and begs her—as his father's head twitches skeptically in the driver's seat—to come and live with him in Paris once she has finished her summer course. Though she knows that it won't happen, this proposal puts the cap on Anna's satisfaction: she imagines a garret in twilight, a glittering net of boulevards, and a lover at her side who is not exactly Étienne but just as French. And with this new image in her mind she strains her neck to look back at the lake for the last time for approximately twenty years.

After that time passes, she'll come back to the Clos Saint Barthélemy and even sleep in the Prior's Room. She will come back with a European husband—one might almost call him the product of this earlier visit: a kind, conservative man who is still enough in love with her to sulk when she tells him that she actually spent a night here once before. She will come back fully educated, well employed and well dressed—if not as well as the woman in pink—familiar with the regional wines and cuisine, the *goût de terroir*. She'll be able to distinguish between the different gradations of prosperous Frenchmen and Germans and Italians, and will understand what red-cheeked soldiers and young American girls mean to them. And as a mother herself she'll give a private shudder at the chance she took so many years before, throwing her lot in so unquestioningly with that curious father and son. The singular pair she never heard from again, who for all their crotchets turned out to be generous and benevolent gatekeepers to the world that has become hers.

And only at night, when the shutters are closed—the hangings in the Chambre du Prieur have been changed from ochre to leaf-green, the frescoes expertly restored, the bathroom remodelled, and a minibar added—will she admit to herself how dreadfully dull the room is now. She'll glance at the painted saints around her and remember—not for long, because otherwise it becomes depressing—how she once had a body so perfect that they leaned out of the walls to look at it. And how she lay under the decorated beams with legs and mouth open to take in the foreignness and the mystery, her appetite the measure of her ignorance; alive in the glory, possible only then, of being hungry, hungry, hungry. ◆

From the Gualala (Calif.) Independent Coast Observer.

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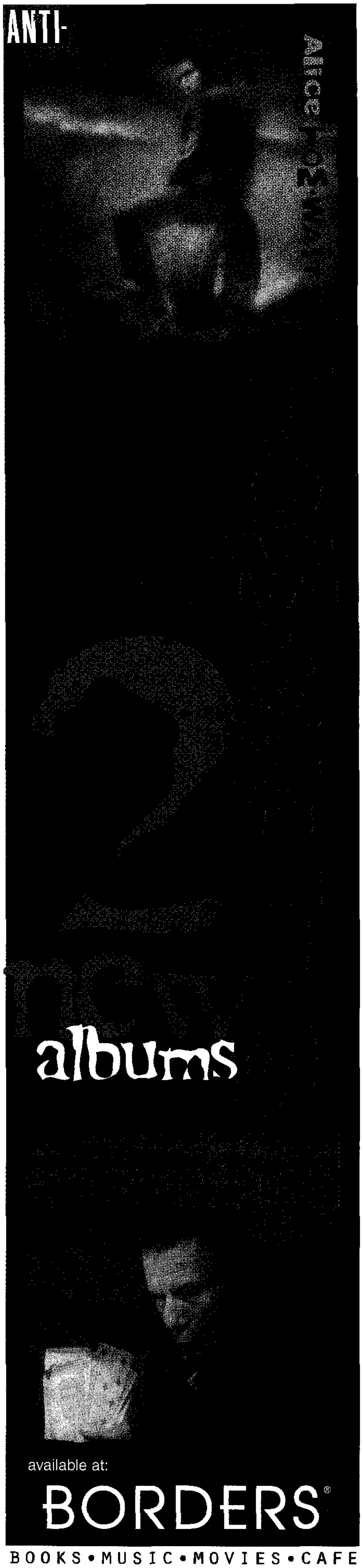

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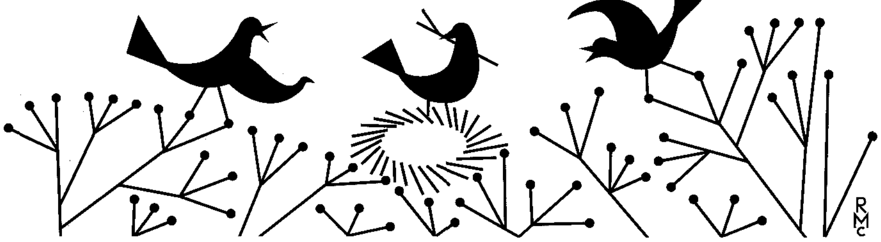


BOOKS

AN UNSIMPLE HEART

A new biography of Flaubert distills his life.

BY JUDITH THURMAN

I once spent a year in the manuscript room of the old French National Library on the Rue de Richelieu. Toward the end of my stay, the curator offered to give me a going-away present: a day at my carrel with any manuscript in her archives. I had nearly all of French literature to choose from, but there was no contest. I asked for Flaubert's "The Sentimental Education." This greatest *Bildungsroman,* one of the first modern novels, tells the mock-epic, tragicomic story of Frédéric Moreau, a provincial dilettante who fritters away an inheritance on the wrong women, friends, pleasures, investments, and causes, and whose ambitions are thwarted as methodically as his illusions are demolished. The book was published in 1869, thirteen years after "Madame Bovary," to excoriating reviews. Writers of an ironic temperament revere it for the qualities that have alienated the larger reading public: its arduous purity of style; its uncompromising pessimism, free of cant; and its refusal to ennoble human nature.

Flaubert wrote a rabidly depressed letter about the novel's reception to his friend George Sand, and she responded with a maternal nudge, typical of their correspondence, for she liked to pretend that his misanthropy was an affectation. "This man who is so kind, so friendly, so cheerful, so simple, so congenial, why does he want to discourage us from living?" she wondered rhetorically. But Sand, who foraged tirelessly for pleasure and companionship, and wrote with complacent fluency, misunderstood the tonic nature of Flaubert's despair. Less of the world is more for him because there can never be enough, and his discouragement with life sets the bar that his pitiless ambition keeps forcing him to transcend.

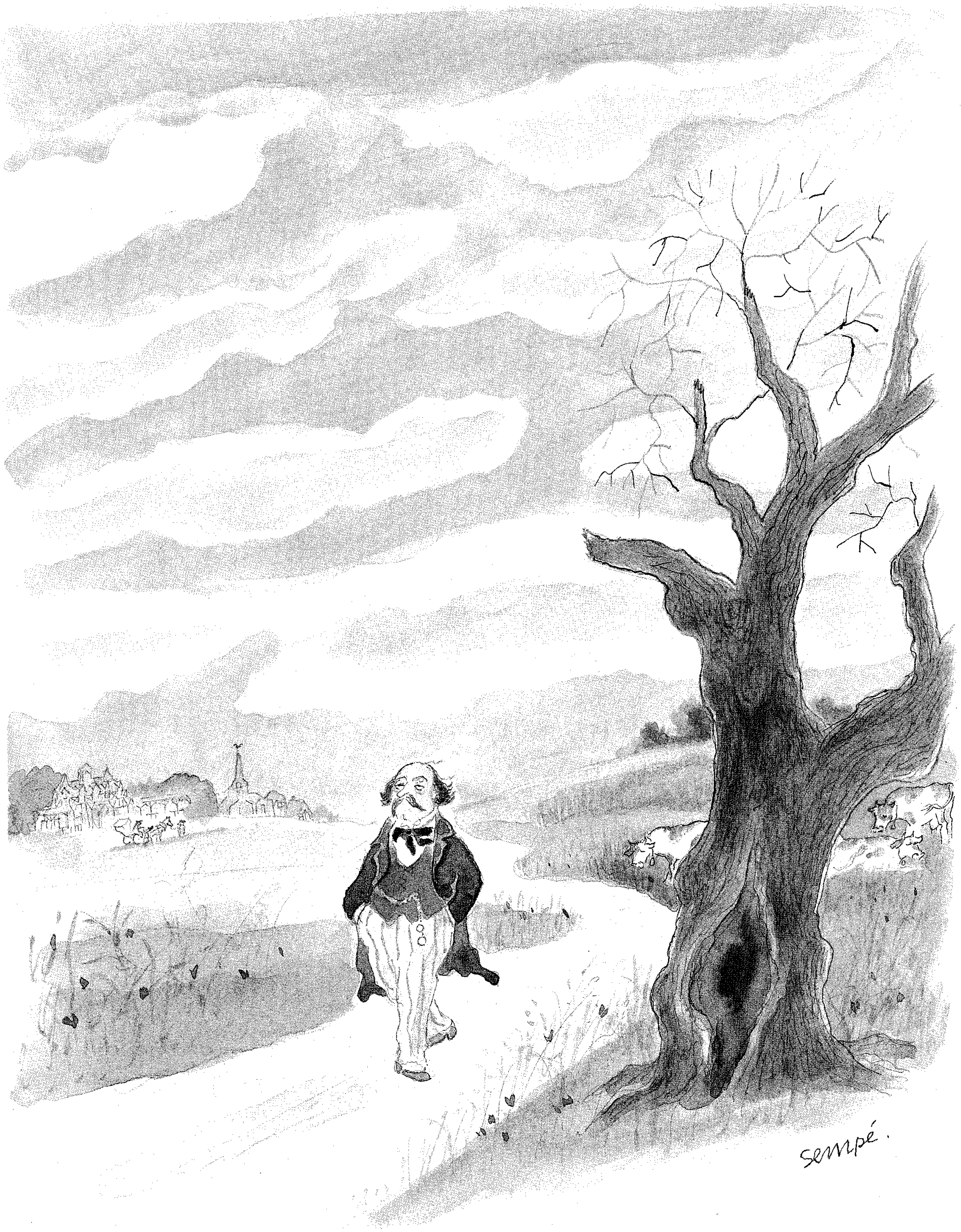
The draft of "The Sentimental Education" runs to twenty-five hundred shagreen-bound folio pages—a fortune in stationery. The writer so wary of self-indulgence was profligate with ink and paper. He covered his leaves minutely, on both sides, with wiry black script. Almost every line is altered or crossed out, then recopied dozens of times. The manuscript has the aspect of a battlefield on which each inch of forward momentum has been wrested at exorbitant human cost from an implacable enemy. An epitaph for this expense of valor comes to mind: Flaubert's words of mourning and consolation from a scene halfway into "Madame Bovary," where Emma's romantic effusions begin, fatally, to bore her lover Rodolphe. Here the author inserts a very rare editorial aside: a defense of his heroine's ineloquence, which sounds like a plea to his own conscience for mercy—"As if the soul's fullness didn't sometimes overflow into the emptiest of metaphors, for no one, ever, can give the exact measure of his needs, his apprehensions, or his sorrows; and human speech is like a cracked cauldron on which we bang out tunes that make bears dance, when we want to move the stars to pity."

The best literary biographies give the most exact possible measure of the overflow from a writer's being into his work. In that respect, "Flaubert: A Life" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $27), by Geoffrey Wall, is an admirable if not completely satisfying book. The author—a British university professor—has a penchant for the pastoral "we," and he occasionally succumbs to what, for a Flaubertian, is the fatal pitfall of solemnity. Discussing "Herodias," the last of the "Three Tales" (a late masterpiece that also includes the novellas "A Simple Heart" and "The Legend of Saint Julian"), Wall complains, as might a nineteenth-century cleric writing to the *Journal de Rouen*, that the ending lacks a proper sense of exaltation. Why? Because the disciples of John the Baptist set off for Galilee with his severed head on a dish, and "as it was very heavy, they each carried it in turn." He finds this "a conclusion so inscrutably prosaic that it leaves us yearning for the poetry of the sacred." But only two things are sacred to Flaubert: impiety and perfection.

Anyone foolhardy enough to enter the lists with Flaubert must submit to the ordeal-by-humiliation of sharing a page with his sentences, and Wall survives. His style has flair (if at times too much), and so does his erudition. Citing the famous passage at the end of the "Education," which must be one of the bleakest elegies ever written—seven telescopic sentences devoid of embellishment that sum up the futility of Frédéric's later life—Wall notes that Flaubert is "showing his successors how to smuggle their old Romantic contraband into a modern realist novel." Wall understands that cunning is necessary, too, when dealing with an obsessive teaser and connoisseur of farce. It is daunting enough to establish a critical beachhead on a character so well defended, in Wall's words, by "lucid comic anguish." But it is practically impossible to ascertain when Flaubert's self-mockery is contrived, and to resist its subversiveness. He was a man who could write of his own violent moods, "I go from exasperation to a state of collapse, then I recover and go from prostration to Fury, so that my average state is one of being annoyed." Two weeks before his death, he told his niece, "Sometimes I think I'm liquefying like an old Camembert."

Wall's condensed portrait is drawn mostly from previously published material, and it doesn't, and perhaps wasn't intended to, enrich Flaubert scholarship.

J.J. SEMPÉ



"A romantic anarchist with a small private income," Flaubert lived in the country with his mother for most of his writing life.

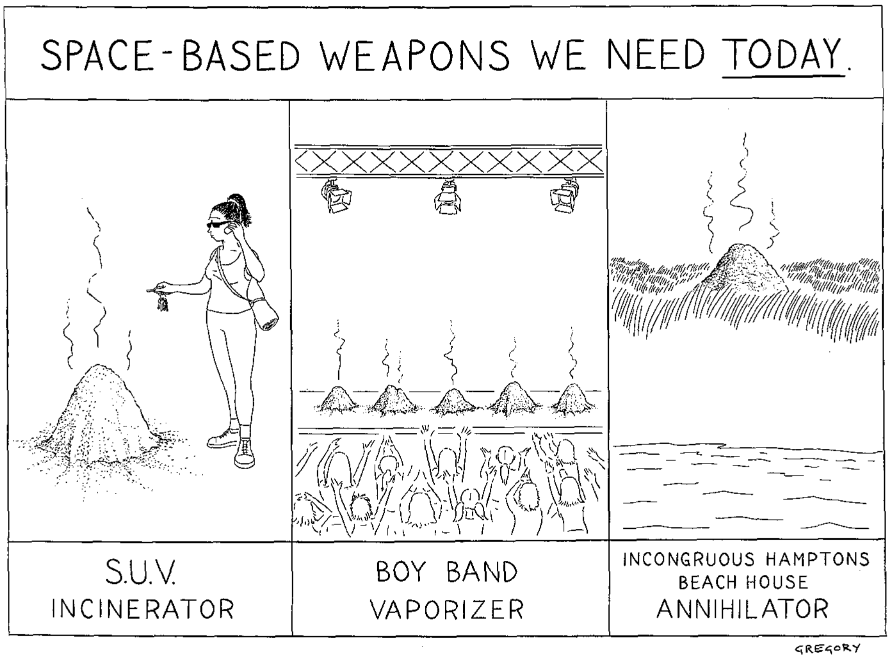
Earlier biographers have mapped the terrain in multiple volumes. Wall is not as dogged as Enid Starkie, as urbane as Francis Steegmuller, or as microscopic as Sartre. No abbreviation of the life may ever match the cranky wit and wry felicity of Julian Barnes's "Flaubert's Parrot" (which, however, enjoys the riffing privileges of fiction). But the author of the "Dictionary of Received Ideas"—the glossary of clichés that Flaubert appended to "Bouvard and Pecuchet," his "encyclopedia of human stupidity" in novel form—would surely have bellowed with joy at the themes listed after his name in Wall's index. With a few minor omissions, they are as follows: "*Flaubert, Gustave:* aesthetic mysticism; alleged sadism; artistic intransigence; attitude to marriage; castration complex; celebrity and influence; chevalier de la Légion d'honneur; death; debts; dogs; fatness; hallucinations; interest in history; masturbation; modernity; pleasure taken in books; pleasure taken in travelling; realism; recitations; romanticism; sexual abstinence; sexual initiation; sexual passion; syphilis; use of prostitutes; views on book illustrations."

Flaubert might also have argued against spoiling the effect of such a deliciously incriminating catalogue with the clutter of elaboration.

In February of 1848, Flaubert travelled to Paris from his native Rouen to join, or at least to observe, the so-called "beautiful revolution." This insurrection of workers and enlightened bourgeois against the aristocracy was fomented by an alliance of socialists, liberals, and Romantic intellectuals (Lamartine was one of its leaders), and, without much bloodshed, it toppled the corrupt regime of King Louis Philippe, instituting the Second Republic—a period of giddy political reform and debate on the Social Contract. Flaubert had just turned twenty-six. He had given up his law studies and had seen something of the world. His father and sister had recently died. He had also embraced his vocation, though its path was obscure. Having scuttled several earlier fictional projects, he was deep into a visionary tale set in the fourth century—"The Temptation of Saint Anthony." "We think you ought to throw it into the fire and never mention it again," said his friends and lifelong literary confidants Louis Bouilhet and Maxime Du Camp when he read them the manuscript. (Flaubert would always be a frugal recycler. He drafted the saint's history at least three times, and the definitive version—his mature view of martyrdom—was published in 1874.)

The pleasures of Flaubert's intense masculine friendships helped to relieve his periodic fits of boredom and gloom, but he still considered "the great event of his life" to have been his encounter, at fourteen, with the maternally lovely older woman—Elisa Schlésinger—who inspired the character of Mme. Arnoux in "The Sentimental Education." If meeting her was the high point of his youth, its nadir was the onset, at twenty-two, of a malady that Flaubert would always refer to evasively as "my nervous attacks." His father, a celebrated surgeon, had recognized the symptoms—hallucinations, convulsions, migraines, blackouts, disturbances of vision, and "cerebral congestion"—and had treated Gustave with the only palliatives then known: regular bloodletting and mercury massages bolstered by a regimen of swimming and a restricted diet. Neither the patient nor his family would ever admit the truth: that Flaubert had epilepsy.

He was supposed to avoid violent stimuli, but when news of the republican insurrection reached Rouen he couldn't resist the chance, as he put it, "to watch the riot 'from the artistic point of view.'" Bouilhet came with him, and they met Du Camp in Paris. There wasn't anything dramatic to see, so they went to dinner at their favorite restaurant. At the door of Du Camp's apartment, they heard gunfire but mistook it for fireworks, and missed the massacre taking place a hundred yards away, on the Boulevard des Capucines. They spent the evening listening to Bouilhet recite his poetry. The next morning, they were able to witness a little picturesque street fighting around the Palais-Royal, and Flaubert and Du Camp (they had lost Louis in the melee) were among the first new "citizens" to tour the liberated Tuileries. At this point, Wall says, the royal apartments were still intact, the crowd was in a festive mood, and two stout apostles of the people sat cheerfully at the King's table finishing his breakfast. But, as the palace wine cellars were emptied, their contents fuelled a spree of looting and vandalism. "Feeling uncomfortably and identifiably bourgeois," the friends retreated, though they managed to talk a mob out of executing some prisoners. Decades later, Flaubert recalled these scenes from 1848 in the dénouement of the "Education." He repudiated all parties, right and left, and, with them, the naïveté of his generation. But he reserved his most unbridled contempt for the Jacobin sanctimony of the ideologues and "speechifiers." Du Camp, deeply influenced by the account, remarked in his memoirs that revolution is always "initiated by simpletons, helped along by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fools, pushed through by rogues, then taken over by the opportunists."

Their age of disaffections was still remote when Flaubert and Du Camp—who had exchanged friendship rings in a spirit of manly Hellenic devotion—left France, in October of 1849, for eighteen months of vagabondage in the Romantic holy lands of southern Europe and the Middle East. Wall gives the flavor of their journey to the Orient in a gamy little inventory of the souvenirs that Flaubert shipped home:

> All the gazelle skins and the lizard skins had been devoured by worms; the pots of ibis . . . broken in transit; and the Nubian garments (female) were horribly rancid. But many other items . . . had happily survived. . . . Hashish, "something special" from Cairo. One small crocodile, Nubian, embalmed. Ten feet of gold-embroidered fabric (wool and silk) from Beirut. Rosaries, eight dozen, from Jerusalem. One rose, ditto, blessed on the Holy Sepulchre. . . . Marble from the Temple of Apollo, one piece. . . . Flowers, for Louis Bouilhet, picked from just by the door of a brothel in Pompeii.

Sated with sublimity and degradation, the adventurers returned to sit by the fire, dreaming, as Flaubert put it, "about hairless cunts." Or at least that's what he did. He would always suffer, Wall writes, from the indignity of being that absurd creature, "a romantic anarchist with a modest private income," and this costly expedition had depleted his capital. Du Camp, heir to a fortune, repaired to the well-furred lairs of Paris.

The Second Republic was short-lived. In 1851, it fell to the coup d'état of "the people's prince," Louis Bonaparte, who had been democratically elected President of France by five and a half million newly enfranchised (male) citizens, including peasants and workers. He quickly became a reactionary tyrant. "The Second Empire was the ridiculous, Ruritanian outcome of three exhausting, audacious years of political experiment," Wall writes. "Pedantic censorship to crush the disobedient, lavish patronage to reward the compliant—these were the blunt instruments of the state's cultural policy. Flaubert endured the full force of both. He was to be persecuted and patronised in almost equal measure."

Nearly thirty, Flaubert had just begun writing "Madame Bovary." He spent the next four and a half years living with his widowed mother and orphaned niece in the family manor at Croisset, on the banks of the Seine south of Rouen. The lamp in the window of his study became a beacon to the rivermen. Like Penelope, he worked through the night, mostly unravelling. The book was composed, Flaubert said, at the rate of "five hundred *irreproachable* words a week" and published in six installments in Du Camp's literary journal, the *Revue de Paris*. They were read as avidly by the imperial police of Napoleon III as by the thousands of stifled provincial housewives—*les bovarystes enragées*—who saw themselves as Emma.

In 1857, after much intrigue and publicity—all of it a vile distraction, in Flaubert's view—he was prosecuted by the state for "grossly offending against public morality, religion, and decency." To his lawyer, he declared himself "puzzled as to the nature of my misdeed":

> Sincere books may sometimes have a certain salutary pungency. Personally I deplore . . . those sugary confections which readers swallow without realizing that they *are quietly poisoning themselves*. It had always been my belief that the novelist, like the traveller, enjoyed the liberty to describe what he saw. Following the example of many others, I could have chosen a subject drawn from the "exceptional" or ignoble ranks of society. I chose, on the contrary, from among the *most prosaically ordinary*. . . . Readers in search of lascivious material . . . will never progress beyond the third page of what I have written. The serious tone will not be to their taste. People do not go to watch surgical operations in a spirit of lubricity.

"The son and brother of famous doctors," Sainte-Beuve wrote in his often quoted review of "Madame Bovary," "Gustave Flaubert wields the pen like a scalpel." Wall, for his part, is smitten unapologetically by the doctor-father's greatness of character and detects, "beneath the brilliant, educated surface" of his mind, "the same tension, between explicit impersonality and unspoken compassion [that] animates the mature style of his son." Flaubert also happens to have been the child of a surgeon's niece, Caroline Fleuriot, but Wall manifests an odd and hostile incuriosity about her. Except to denigrate Mme. Flaubert as "glacial," "querulous," and "coldly aristocratic," he treats her as a cipher. Yet Gustave lived with his "Maman" for most of his life. In a certain sense, he inherited her "cult for form," as Sand describes Flaubert's true religion. He re-

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spected her advice and depended upon her purse. She provided him with many kinds of comfort and containment. Upon her death, in 1872, Flaubert realized, he told Sand, "that my poor dear mother was the person I have loved most. It feels as though a piece of my guts has been torn out."

Flaubert and his two siblings, Achille and Caroline, spent their earliest years in a wing of their father's hospital, the Hôtel-Dieu, a labyrinthine public institution. Dr. Flaubert's dissection room looked onto the family's garden, and, by climbing the trellis and clinging to the vines, Gustave and his sister could see the corpses laid out, abuzz with flies, and their father standing above them with a sharpened blade. At the age of five or six, he told Sand, he had wanted to " 'send my heart' to a little girl I was in love with (I mean my actual heart). I could see it on a bed of straw, in a hamper, a hamper full of oysters." In the same period, the Flauberts employed a fetching, "simple-hearted" peasant nursemaid called Julie. Fetching, simple-hearted peasant nursemaids seem to occupy an inordinately prominent place in French literature and biography. Julie (not her real name, she said) liked to overexcite her pet, "Monsieur Gustave," with amorous kisses and fairy tales of the grimmer, more fabulous variety. She also told him—dubiously, considering her station—that she had once spent an entire year reading in bed. "All our lives we still smell of our nurse's milk," Flaubert wrote. In his case, however, the smell of childhood was of a sunlit garden, *cuisine bourgeoise*, and a warm, lactating breast mixed with blood and rotting flesh.

By the time of the "Madame Bovary" trial, Flaubert, at thirty-five, was prematurely decrepit. He would always tower above his contemporaries—he was over six feet tall—but he had lost the striking Apollonian beauty of his youth to the Nubian desert sun; to a sedentary life; to his venereal souvenirs from the dives of Esneh; to an excessive fondness for his pipe; and to the periodic attacks of epilepsy that, with syphilis, probably killed him. He had become a nearly bald and paunchy giant with a heavy, saturnine countenance chronically plagued, as was his body, by eczema and boils—the sort of man, he once joked, "that whores wince at when it comes to the shagging."

Not every woman winced, however. It is true that Flaubert was celibate by choice for long periods; that he never consummated his greatest love (for Mme. Schlésinger); and that masturbation—the vice of the self-employed—was his most reliable source of release. But Flaubert also dallied with housemaids, actresses, artists' models, society hostesses, and the English governess of his niece, Caroline. The story of his longest, most flamboyant affair has probably enthralled more readers than any of his obscurer fictions, and, while this irony might or might not have amused him, it would certainly have confirmed his opinion of the book-buying public.

Wall describes the mistress in question, who was eleven years Flaubert's senior, in the style of the "Dictionary of Received Ideas." Louise Colet: "Socialist-feminist writer . . . victim of much misogynist ridicule, notoriously vain and spiteful. An impossible person." She and Flaubert were thus ideally suited to drive each other crazy, and they did. At the beginning, his frustrated ardor responded ecstatically to her vitality. "You would breathe love into a dead man," he told her. He paid her the compliment, which she resented, of using her the way he used his most intimate male friends, as a sounding board for his work-in-progress and his literary enthusiasms. ("So what the devil do you want me to talk to you about if not Shakespeare?") But she was more interested in flowery raptures and perhaps a baby. Quite soon, Gustave was correcting her "illusions" about him—"You deserved better"—and then he took to shouting, as if at someone stone deaf, that for him love could never be "the main dish of existence."

A pious utopian (bleeding hearts are a leitmotif of Flaubert biography), Louise objected, Wall writes, to "Flaubert's 'aristocratic ideas' about women," and she complained that his mockery had killed her love. Confident about her looks ("My bust . . . and arms are extremely beautiful. . . . My nose is charming . . . my legs are perfect"), and their effect on men, she had always been generous with her favors. But she cherished the touching hope of marrying well—indeed, of marrying Flaubert—and she didn't like being treated "as a woman of the lowest order." The passionate sincerity with which, at first, he defended himself against her accusations and demands gave way to frigidly ironic politeness and, as time passed, to exasperated brutality: "If you could have been content with gallantry spiced up with a little sentiment and a little poetry, perhaps you would not have met with this fall which has caused you so much suffering." Even then, she was impossible to shake off.

The egomania of Louise Colet, unlike the egomania of Gustave Flaubert, was so unpolluted by self-consciousness that it achieves a certain comic grandeur. She lived in Paris on the margins of the demimonde, dependent on a series of celebrity protectors (Alfred de Musset, Alfred de Vigny, and Victor Cousin, among others), and valiantly eked out a debt-ridden living, like Mlle. Vatnaz in "The Sentimental Education," by contributing to bluestocking journals, writing about fashion, and composing mawkish verse that she proudly sent to her paramour, who—ever incorruptible—felt morally obliged to savage it: "Do not imagine you can exorcise what oppresses you in life by giving vent to it in art." For nearly a decade, on and off, Louise and Gustave met every few months for what he was pleased to call a "big fuck," usually at a cheap hotel near the railway station in Mantes, a town conveniently situated halfway between their two abodes. ("O bed! If you could speak," Louise exclaims in one her poems, a twelve-part opus.) These erratic trysts were hardly enough to gratify a woman of her socio-literary aspirations. While she obsessed about meeting Flaubert's mother, pined for his devotion, griped about his ingratitude, schemed to arouse his jealousy, bristled at his insistence on *coitus interruptus*, and sent him a lock of Chateaubriand's hair, he toyed with her feelings in immortal epistolary prose laced with quite a bit of infantile whining. "You have hurt yourself on the secrets of my heart," he chided her. And he compared himself to an angry leper turning against the misguided do-gooder who stops to dress his sores.

Flaubert was acquitted of the charges against him in the case of Emma Bovary. In certain quarters—having been cast as the Ted Hughes of the nineteenth century—he has never been acquitted of the charges against him in the case of Louise Colet. In one respect, perhaps, justice was served divinely: wherever posterity entertains the great man, his ex-girlfriend is invited. But "with [her] passing," Wall writes, "some portion of Flaubert's inner life disappears from view. . . . A new, unexpected, public figure now enters the scene . . . a man of the salon and the boulevard, master of intrigue, expert in 'the art of shaking hands,' an author indeed."

Even before "Madame Bovary" was finished, Flaubert had warned his friends that he was feeling "a need for immense epics." He yearned for a vacation from the austerity of his style and the claustrophobia of his subject matter, and now he was free to take one. In 1858, he spent six weeks touring the ruins of Carthage and enjoying the taverns of Tunis (and perhaps its male brothels—his letters refer to them in passing). When he returned, he began to distill his impressions of the trip and his avid reading of ancient history into "Salammbô," the kind of febrile costume drama his friends had once urged him to feed to the fire. Fastidiously documented tales of half-dressed pagan practitioners of human sacrifice sold well, and this redolent "stew" of barbaric horrors, perversities, and sacred rites was the most popular of Flaubert's novels among his contemporaries. It became a "cult book" to the decadents, then an opera, and inspired a school of kitschy salon art, most of it featuring some version of a dusky princess in deshabille posed ecstatically with a snake. When the manuscript of "Salammbô" was nearly completed, Flaubert invited a small party of friends, including the prissy Goncourt brothers, to a private reading—or, rather, a declamation, for he liked to bray his work at the top of his lungs—that lasted for ten hours. "To mark the occasion," Wall writes, "a special Oriental dinner was to be served. The menu included 'human flesh, brain of bourgeois and tigress clitorises sautéed in rhinoceros butter.' "

Corruption and hypocrisy, the former as lavish as the latter was rank, were the hallmarks of the Second Empire, and the same regime that had prosecuted the obscure degenerate responsible for "Madame Bovary" now fêted the best-selling *érudit* who had conceived "Salammbô." The Emperor's witty cousin

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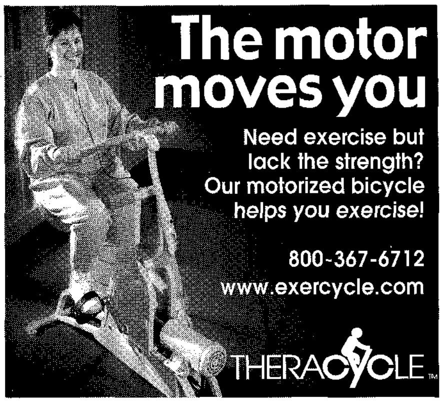

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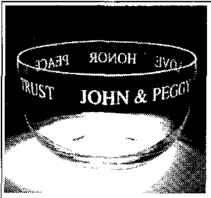

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Princess Mathilde, whose nickname was Notre Dame des Arts, asked him to her Wednesday receptions, and their friendship generated a correspondence that was ardent though high-minded on both sides. The courier who delivered her dinner invitations, in a uniform "bristling with medals," Wall notes, "always made a great impression on Flaubert's Parisian concierge."

At the Princess's mansion on the Rue de Courcelles, Flaubert was introduced to the Empress Eugénie, who asked his permission to copy one of Salammbô's costumes for a ballgown. He also met the Tsar of the Russians ("a slob," he told George Sand) and many other literary and imperial luminaries. "Elegantly dressed and copiously perfumed," Wall writes, and "joking that he looked like Almanzor, the worst of de Sade's old aristos," Flaubert eventually penetrated even the royal country house at Compiègne. As he paid his respects to the Emperor, he must have recalled—with what bemusement?—that remote banquet of impudence at the Tuileries in 1848. Later, he would use his influence as a courtier to dispense patronage, fixing lawsuits and securing commissions for his friends. And in August of 1866 he received—ostensibly for "Salammbô" but surely also for deploying his powers to make bears dance—the Legion of Honor. I agree with Wall that "the last word" on the paradox of what Flaubert called his "prolonged moral cohabitation with the bourgeois" should be his: "Legion of Honor, Medal of the: To be sneered at, even though you rather covet one."

In the fourteen years left of his life—he died in 1880—Flaubert consorted with the friends he deserved: Turgenev, Zola, Maupassant, and Sand. But Louis Bouilhet died in 1869, a few months before "The Sentimental Education" was published, and Flaubert mourned the loss not only of a man he had loved for over twenty years but of "my midwife" and "my compass." Afflicted by syphilis, and perhaps even more so by the remedies prescribed for it, his health declined. France declared war on Prussia, and the ignoble defeat and capture of Napoleon III at Sedan was followed by a murderous civil uprising. "I feel we are entering into darkness," Flaubert prophesied to Sand. "Perhaps race wars are going to begin again? Over the next hundred years we shall see several million men killing each other at a single sitting. All of the Orient against all of Europe, the old world against the new." Then he added, typically, "Why not?"

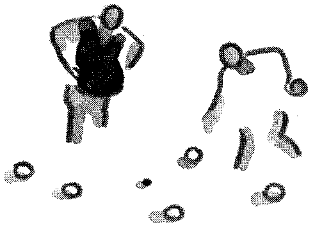
In 1875, the brothers Flaubert discovered that their nephew-in-law, Ernest Commanville—a quintessential Second Empire speculator and profiteer—had accumulated debts of one and a half million francs. In an attempt to avert the ruin of his niece, Flaubert sacrificed his inheritance. Early the next year, he learned that Louise Colet had died. That summer, Sand succumbed to stomach cancer at Nohant. "My heart is becoming a necropolis," he told Princess Mathilde. He and Sand had exchanged visits to Nohant and Croisset, and some of the most eloquently fraternal letters on the métier of literature ever written, but they had never ceased to argue about his artistic "intransigence" and her metaphysical "idealism." In one of their last sallies, she begged him—because "you *must* have a success"—to write something a large public could love. "Retain your cult for form," she said. But "don't hold true virtue to be a cliché in literature." He replied that he had begun a humane "little work" that would show her "I am not as obstinate as you think."

In writing "A Simple Heart," his tribute to Sand—a story that makes a true virtue of love but refuses to derive any moral from it—Flaubert briefly experienced a buoyancy he had rarely known and would never recover. It was midsummer, and he was living at Croisset. In the heat of August, he swam in the Seine, parsing phrases in his head, and his sentences came back to him once he fell asleep, rolling "like the chariots of some Roman emperor, and they wake me with a start by. . . their endless rumbling." He had recently brought his old nurse Julie, now ancient and blind, to live in the country with him. She enjoyed the air, and a child led her around the garden. The week she arrived, Flaubert had also acquired a stuffed parrot—his model for Félicité's Loulou in the tale. It stood on his writing table and stared at him through a glass eye. "The sight of the thing is beginning to annoy me," Flaubert told his niece. "But I'm keeping him there, to fill my mind with the idea of parrothood." ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

By the Lake, *by John McGahern (Knopf; $24).* This stately novel by one of Ireland's foremost writers is, as its title suggests, primarily about the rhythms and cadences of place. The story is an old one: in search of a quieter way of life, Joe and Kate Ruttledge have traded their careers in London for a farm near a small Irish village, where they learn how to raise sheep and are steadily drawn into the lives of their neighbors. There's the Shah, a rich bachelor in search of an heir for his business; John Quinn, a weaselly sexual predator, and a danger to women throughout the county; and Jimmy Joe McKiernan, an I.R.A. leader whose exploits periodically stir up high feeling. McGahern is never sentimental, and the novel's greatest pleasures come from the unflinching probity of his observations: he writes as crisply about the parsimony of a neighbor or sending lambs to be slaughtered as he does about the notion that happiness "should be allowed its own slow pace so that it passes unnoticed, if it ever comes at all."

The Short Sweet Dream of Eduardo Gutiérrez, *by Jimmy Breslin (Crown; $22).* In 1999, at the age of twenty-one, Eduardo Gutiérrez, an illegal immigrant, drowned in concrete at a Brooklyn building site. In this melancholy and sometimes angry book, Breslin traces Gutiérrez's life, from his birth to a brickmaker and his wife in a small, dusty Mexican town to his final days as "cheap labor" for Eugene Ostreicher, a Williamsburg builder notorious for his shoddy standards. Breslin directs his anger at many targets, including United States immigration policy and the bureaucratic inertia of the city's Buildings Department, but he saves his most venomous attacks for the developers, "crooks with blueprints," and the Giuliani administration, which valued their support too highly. The real strength of this book, however, lies in its quietest passages, with Breslin's depiction of Gutiérrez and his fellow-workers, the "commune of the lonely," and the reclamation of the details of Gutiérrez's short life.



Two Gardeners: A Friendship in Letters, *edited by Emily Herring Wilson (Beacon; $25).* In 1958, Katharine S. White, an editor at this magazine and the wife of E. B. White, began writing a gardening column, which appeared intermittently, like lady's slippers, under the heading "Onward and Upward in the Garden," until 1970. The first essay prompted a fan letter from the distinguished Southern gardener Elizabeth Lawrence, who wrote a weekly column for the Charlotte *Observer.* In more than a hundred and fifty letters, they discussed subjects ranging from bloom times in their respective zones to meetings with cantankerous plantsmen, their burgeoning families, and, as time passed, the vicissitudes of old age. Those unfamiliar with Lawrence will be glad to meet her; for fans of the Whites, to hear once more about doings in North Brooklin, Maine, is akin to a visitation.

The Birthday of the World and Other Stories, *by Ursula K. Le Guin (HarperCollins; $24.95).* Le Guin made her name as a writer of science fiction and fantasy, but—like John le Carré's spy novels, or Larry McMurtry's Westerns—her work transcends the usual limitations of the genre, and this collection is no exception. Some of the imagined worlds here are ancient civilizations governed by sun or sea, and some are highly controlled, synthetic environments floating through space, but all of them offer a stimulating counterpoint to the way we live now. Le Guin appears to have the most fun with her investigations of sex and gender—the ghettoization of men on Seggri, the elaborate marital quartets on the Planet O—but the costs of revolution, religious bliss, and technology are also provocatively explored, and one returns to the current headlines with a fresh awareness of the exotic, provisional nature of human arrangements.

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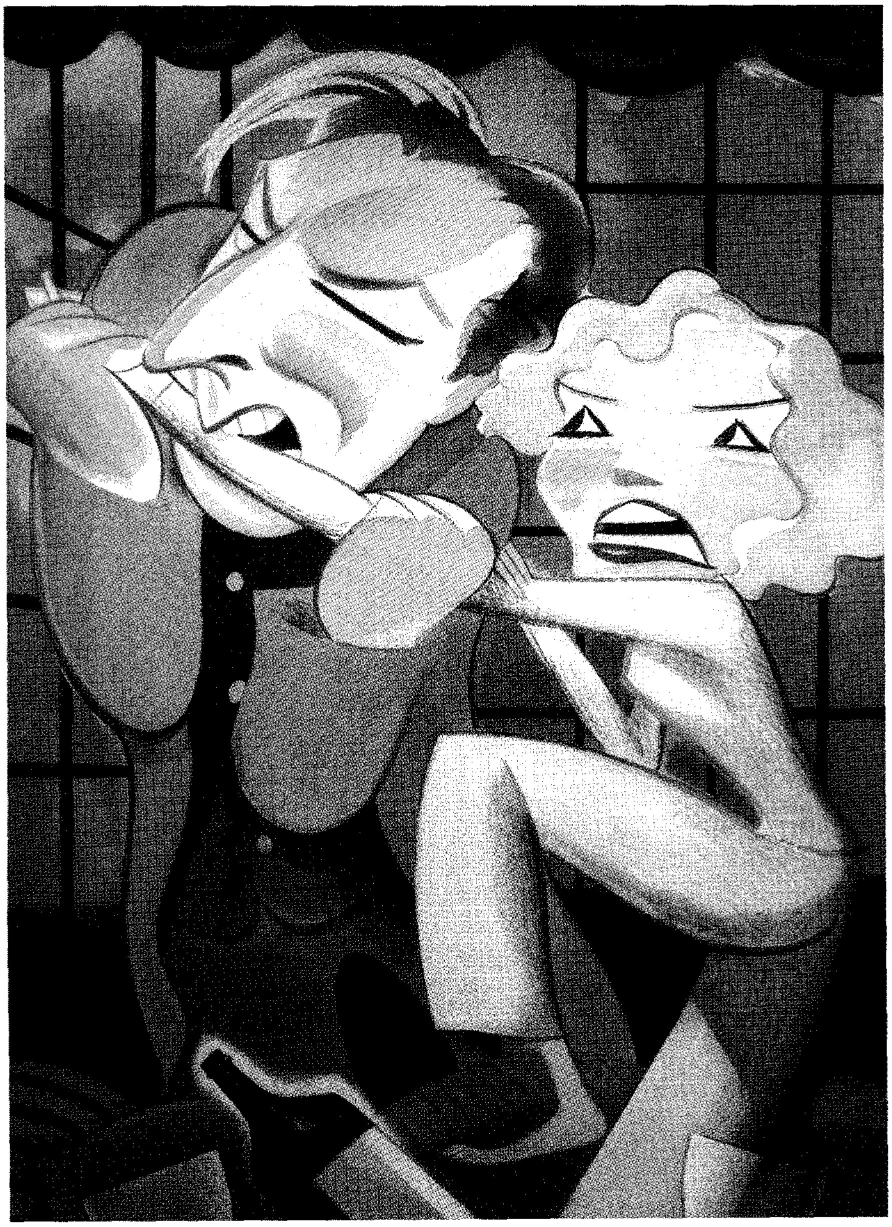
THE THEATRE

LOVE BITES

Behaving badly in "Private Lives."

BY JOHN LAHR

On Noël Coward's bookplates was a caricature of him winking—a gesture that announced both his raffish insouciance and his high-camp refusal to suffer. Coward was his own unrepentant invention, and he made a myth of his separation from others. "I am related to no one except myself," he said. He was an egotist; he was a gay man who passed for a heterosexual matinée idol; and he had the public's number. His wink was the visual equivalent of a raspberry blown at convention. Coward gives that impulse a voice in the most gossamer of his good plays, "Private Lives," when his spokesman Elyot Chase says, "Let's be superficial and pity the poor philosophers. Let's blow trumpets and squeakers, and enjoy the party, as much as we can, like very small, quite idiotic school children." Coward's trumpets and squeakers blow full force in the acclaimed London production directed by Howard Davies (which has been imported to the Richard Rodgers, along with its two theatrical grandees, Alan Rickman and Lindsay Duncan). "You mustn't be serious, my dear one; it's just what they want," Elyot tells his former wife, Amanda, after they've rediscovered each other, on adjacent patios in Deauville, while both on their second honeymoons with new mates. He goes on, "All the futile moralists who try to make life unbearable. Laugh at them. . . . Laugh at everything, all their sacred shibboleths. Flippancy brings out the acid in their damned sweetness and light."



Alan Rickman and Lindsay Duncan: the couple that plays together stays together.

ERIC PALMA

"Private Lives" is a comedy of bad manners, whose emotional and structural minimalism turns all the cumbersome proprieties of English drawing-room drama upside down. The play was first staged in 1930, as the decorum of the turn of the century was giving way to a post-First World War sense of dissolution, in which romance was a put-on, honor a masquerade, and communication a kind of false trail of language that led only back to solitude:

AMANDA: China must be very interesting.
ELYOT: Very big, China.
AMANDA: And Japan—
ELYOT: Very small.

In the play's brilliantly constructed first scene, Amanda and Elyot don't meet cute; they meet in high dudgeon. Elyot smokes a cigarette, and Amanda crosses over to his balcony. "Give me one, for God's sake," she says. They are furious with each other and with their new marriages of inconvenience. They stand looking out at the sea, and at the Duke of Westminster's yacht. Amanda says, "I wish I were on it." Elyot replies, "I wish you were too." Thus begins the rebarbative banter, the vinegar in which Britain's sophisticated twenties and thirties were pickled.

Elyot and Amanda—two dandies of detachment who jilt their spouses and run away together to a Parisian love nest—do no real work and have no faith, no principles, and no commitment to anything but their own pleasure. "Within a few years," one dyspeptic early critic wrote, "the student of drama will be sitting in complete bewilderment before the text of 'Private Lives,' wondering what on earth these fellows in 1930 saw in so flimsy a trifle." On the contrary, Elyot and Amanda are among the first enduring sightings on the British stage of what might be called "the modern." Coward—who wrote, in the song "Twentieth Century Blues," "What is there to strive for / Love or keep alive for?"—managed to translate his metaphysical stalemate into comic action. English life had lost its sense of continuity, and Elyot and Amanda are, like the plot, aimless. Their capriciousness is at once galling and, when viewed from Coward's slyly renegade perspective, gallant. His totemic wink surfaces dramatically at the play's finale, during a humiliating showdown between Elyot and Amanda and their outraged mates, Sybil and Victor, who hunt them down and are hellbent on castigating them. The castoffs start to bicker—"I fail to see what humor there is in incessant trivial flippancy," Victor says, when Sybil defends her feckless husband—and, just then, Elyot slips the wink to Amanda. The plot hinges on this moment: it acknowledges the defiant bond of caprice and engineers peace between the exes. As the curtain falls, Sybil and Victor are pummelling each other; Elyot and Amanda tiptoe away from the chaos and out the door. For Coward, who never fully revealed himself in public, this image of evasion is iconic—he repeats it at the end of "Hay Fever" and of "Present Laughter"—and it works as a sort of mission statement for all of his comedy.

In an attempt to disarm critics as well as the public, Coward wrote a series of acute assessments of his plays, which serve as introductions to them. " 'Private Lives,' from the playwright's point of view, may or may not be considered interesting," he wrote, "but, at any rate, from the point of view of technical acting, it is very interesting indeed." As usual, the Master was right; as Elyot and Amanda, Rickman and Duncan have a field day with Coward's nuanced silences, with all the verbal tics and physical revelations of repressed feeling. They understand and convey the essential spiritual conundrum of their characters, who are at once overexcited and underinvolved. I have heard it said that Rickman is a selfish actor—an opinion I heartily decry. He has a sensationally droll presence, underscored by his oboelike voice, which is bored at the edges and content to make its own mellow ironic music. Words—especially consonants—hold their fire, then spill out with hilarious precision. "Mr. and Mrs. Victor *Prynne*," he says to Amanda, rolling her new name on his tongue with teasing condescension. In mockery, Rickman can be lethal. He also knows the value of being still; his underplaying draws the audience in. In the face of his jejune, pert new bride (the excellent Emma Fielding), Rickman uses his heavy-lidded eyes to parse every aspect of ennui—resignation, sorrow, fatigue, scorn. Standing on Tim Hatley's witty hotel balcony, with the other white balconies above him cantilevered backward like a tilting wedding cake, he strikes something more than the usual clipped, pukka Coward stereotype. Like Coward, he exudes an adamant faith in his own intelligence.

This confidence positively combusts when it meets up with Duncan's quick-witted combination of sex and steel. Duncan is, for me, the finest and most versatile English actress of her generation. In the first scene, she strides onstage in a sleek black-and-white dressing gown, and before she even opens her mouth you know, from her particular aura of containment, that a wild heart is trapped within the cage of her politesse. Duncan has the look of an angel and the mischievous eyes of a devil. When she confesses to her lanky, jug-eared husband (the expert Adam Godley) that her young heart "was jagged with sophistication," she reveals both a sharp mind and a wicked tongue. With her bravado, Duncan hints at shadow but never shows it.

"Manners are especially the need of the plain," Evelyn Waugh joked. "The pretty can get away with anything." "Private Lives" proves the point. Act II finds the giddy goats ensconced in Amanda's garret, a large crimson split-level pad, overflowing with pillows and couches. Elyot and Amanda, who are "beautiful people," are now working hard to behave beautifully with each other. Rickman and Duncan have a great time walking on these emotional eggshells. They foxtrot around the parquet floor; they sing; they make a playful spectacle of their mental agility; they even staunchly refuse to fight.

> AMANDA: It's nice, isn't it?
> ELYOT: Strangely peaceful. It's an awfully bad reflection on our characters. We ought to be absolutely tortured with conscience.
> AMANDA: We are, every now and then. . . .
> ELYOT: You're even more ruthless than I am.

Coward understands that manners are about reciprocity, which is well beyond these two. All avowals to the contrary, Amanda and Elyot can't get beyond themselves—a tragedy in life, but a gold mine in comedy. Their outrageousness works a kind of psychic jujitsu that dethrones the serious and neutralizes moral indignation. Thrown off guard by the characters' irresistible high jinks, the audience finds itself accepting the unacceptable; "bad" becomes "good." This is Coward's deft and exhilarating game.

Howard Davies's radical notion is to play Elyot and Amanda's physical passion for real, rather than opting for the standard notional sexual allure. This allows him to capitalize on the wonderful chemistry between Rickman and Duncan, and gives them some memorable moments of "big romantic stuff" while snuggled up on sofas, but it also throws the comedy weirdly off kilter. Coward knew that this particular fun machine was jerry-built—"As a complete play, it leaves a lot to be desired," he wrote—and that speed was essential to make its jokes and its artificiality pay off. Here Act II, which is the play's set piece, goes on too long. When the tormenting couple shout out their code word for silence ("Sollocks") and call for a two-minute cool-down period, the actors amble wordlessly around their garret for two real minutes. When Elyot sits at the piano to sing "Some Day I'll Find You," the song turns into a medley, in which he is joined by Amanda. The famous battle royal that ends the second act is transformed by Davies from a spontaneous free-for-all into a self-conscious production number. Although well executed, it mutes the hilarity of Sybil and Victor's shock when they walk in on their spouses, only to find them rolling on the floor, going at each other hammer and tongs. Still, if the pacing sometimes falters, the stars' bad behavior does not. Rickman and Duncan give the best comic performances that have been seen on Broadway in a very long time. ♦

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"Murder by Numbers" and "Changing Lanes."

BY DAVID DENBY

Over the past few months, the theatres have been filled with thrillers, and some of the people making them are eager to escape formula without escaping too far—that is, not so far that they leave the big audience behind. "Murder by Numbers," with Sandra Bullock, escapes about halfway. The movie is seriously forensic in its approach to crime. A corpse looks like a corpse, and there's much expert patter about the DNA value of vomit and the emotional significance of shallow knife wounds and whatnot. The crime-lab discourse is not all that different from what you might hear in a police-procedural show on TV, but the characters have odd obsessions and histories, and the director, Barbet Schroeder, brings out the perversities in their relations with one another. "Murder by Numbers" is an uncertain cross between routine and original touches. The producer, Richard Crystal, initiated the project with the idea of doing a contemporary, California-set Leopold-and-Loeb story, and the screenwriter, Tony Gayton, provided two would-be high-school supermen—the morosely bookish Justin (Michael Pitt), who pulls out a volume of Rimbaud when he's bored, and his friend Richard (Ryan Gosling), a cocky rich kid with heightened powers of seduction and intimidation. These two meet secretly in an abandoned house set on a cliff overlooking the ocean, where they drink absinthe and speak sub-Nietzschean drivel like "One cannot live fully without embracing suicide and crime." They are meant to be naïve boys playing with extreme ideas and then getting into much more trouble than they can handle. They plan and carry out the murder of a woman randomly selected on the street—a shopper, loading groceries into her trunk—just to prove their superiority and to seal their relationship, which borders on, but perhaps doesn't pass into, the sexual.

The filmmakers combined this semi-familiar plot idea (it's been done before in "Rope," "Compulsion," and "Swoon") with the prickly Sandra Bullock, who has become a movie genre in herself. This time, however, Bullock shades what she normally does into something more interesting. Her hair pulled back, she plays brainy, screwed-up Cassie, a homicide detective with an unhappy past, and although Jodie Foster would have been better, Bullock does the role as straight as she can. Cassie is breaking in a new partner (the gentle-eyed Ben Chaplin), and Bullock, who enters the crime scene holding a box of doughnuts, speaks in a low voice, looking away from the camera, her attention fixed on the dead body and the terrain. Most movie stars instantly engage the camera, even flirt with it—that's one reason they become movie stars. Bullock is now so confident of her rapport with the audience that she can hold off, for a while, at least, and she reads most of her lines in a surprisingly clipped and unemphatic way. Is she believable as a crime specialist? Well, she's believable as a comedy star attempting to give a quiet, serious performance as a crime specialist. It's also the angriest and sexiest work she's done—she seduces Chaplin in record time and then kicks him out of bed well before dawn.

There is a connection between Cassie and the kids, lodged in an episode in her past, that causes her to be both attracted to and repelled by the self-assured Richard. She's sure that he's the killer and that Justin has helped him; "Murder by Numbers" is not a whodunit

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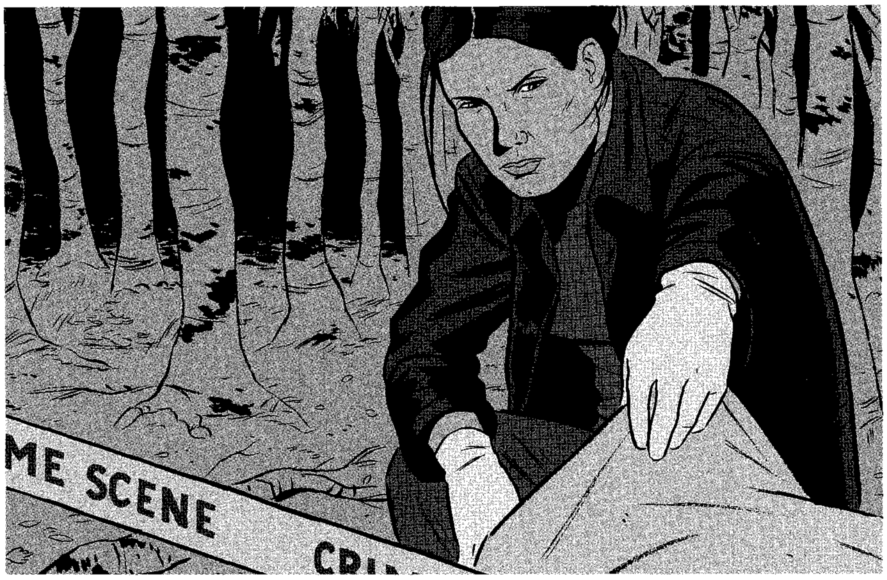
but a can-she-prove-it. It is driven by the traditional figure of the obsessed cop—the female version, this time—who pushes past the rules, outrages her superiors, puts herself at risk, and all the rest of that movie stuff. Yet the clichés are organized skillfully: the filmmakers interweave scenes of detection with scenes of the crime itself, which is shown in grisly pieces as the clues fall into place. The real interest in "Murder by Numbers," however, lies in its subtext of loathing and desire—a specialty long cultivated by Barbet Schroeder, whose American career as a director peaked artistically with "Reversal of Fortune" (1990) and commercially with "Single White Female" (1992). For years, Schroeder has attempted to lessen American innocence. In "Murder by Numbers," he develops the two boys as calculating snakes in the California garden, and he handles the young actors well. Michael Pitt, with his fat upper lip, his blockish forehead, and his hair hanging over his ears and neck, is a large pudding of advanced teen misery. Ryan Gosling has a sly smile and crinkled eyes that promise some deep, hidden knowledge that only he can divulge. He is an amusing and canny young actor, and a possible star. Bullock looks into his face and sees every woman's nemesis—a young man who gets away with knowing that he's irresistible.

"Changing Lanes" is a surprise: a commercial movie that turns out to be much more serious than anyone had a right to expect. Two fallible New York men—a privileged but corruptible young Wall Street lawyer (Ben Affleck) and a troubled husband and father who works as an insurance salesman (Samuel L. Jackson)—get into a minor collision one spring morning on the F.D.R. Drive, and, instead of just letting it go, they exacerbate their grievances and spend the rest of the day playing dirty tricks on each other. There's a small amount of violence, but it's done realistically, and it's not what the movie is about. "Changing Lanes" sounds an authentic note of liberal concern for the dignity of limited men who make awful fools of themselves. The writers, Chap Taylor and Michael Tolkin, and the director, the Englishman Roger Michell ("Notting Hill"), pay their respects as well to such irritating facts of life as overburdened courts and banks and the outright unpleasantness of rain hitting you in the face on a cold March day. The plot, with its matched, escalating acts of revenge, may be a contrivance, but within that contrivance "Changing Lanes" plays earnestly and well. Because of the odd combination of gimmick and painful realism, however, I fought the movie for about an hour. Guys as smart as these two would bury the hatchet and help each other, I thought. Yet sometimes what's most infuriating in a fiction may be exactly what's strong and good about it. "Changing Lanes" is less a thriller than a fable of mistrust. Under the surface of a competitive society, the movie implies, an enormous malevolence gathers force and occasionally breaks through, leaving anyone who takes part in the eruption feeling ridiculous and bewildered.



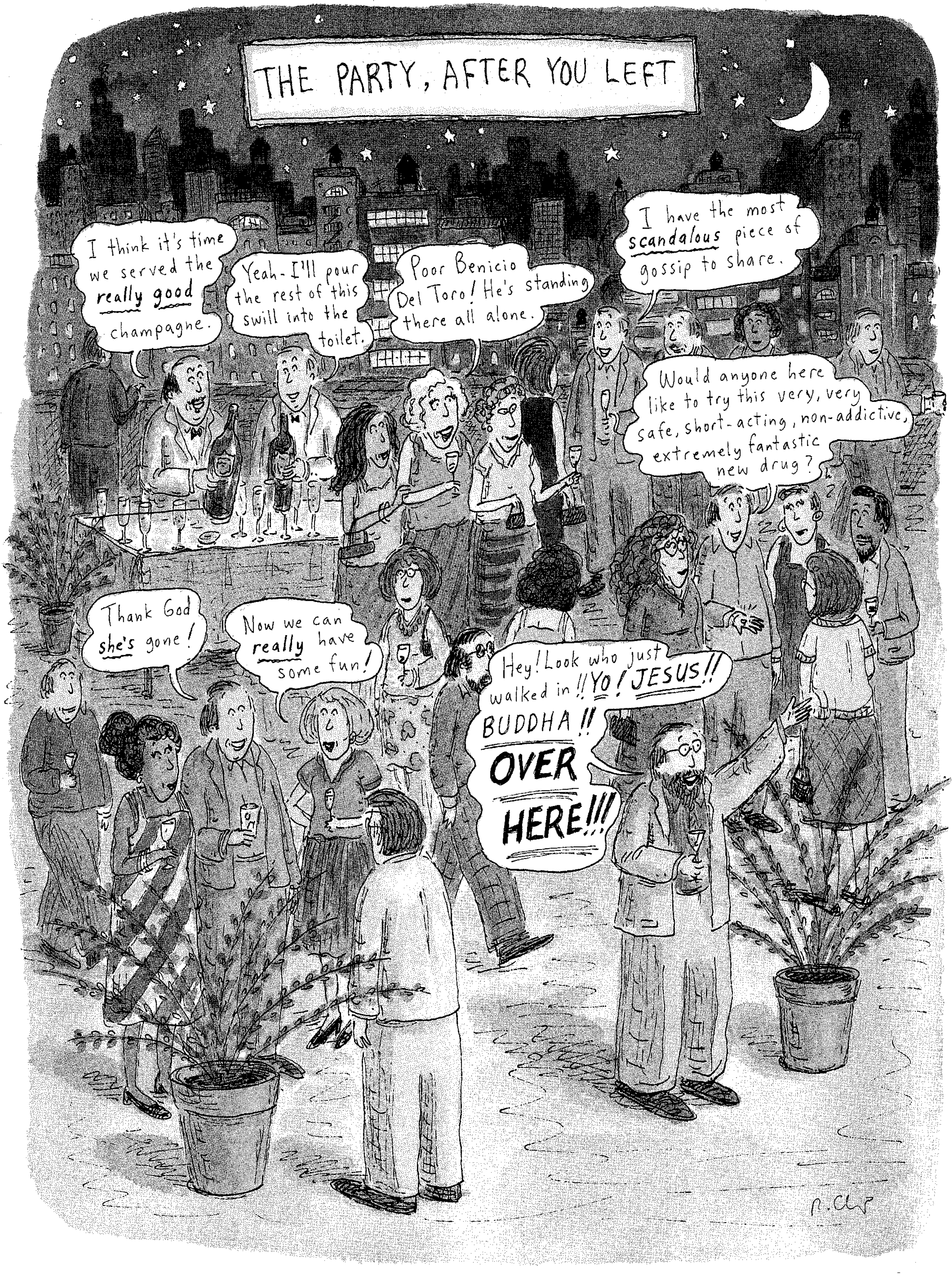
Sandra Bullock plays a homicide detective with an unhappy past.

ADRIAN TOMINE

Another surprise is that Ben Affleck is an actor after all. In the past, playing callow young men, he seemed callow himself, gesturing halfheartedly at roles that he may have thought were beneath his intelligence. But here the role of a man who has known success too quickly fits easily on his big, square-shouldered frame. His Gavin Banek is a fast-moving guy whose body has grown up while his judgment has remained dim and unformed. He doesn't know himself; he sustains an attitude of false bonhomie while doing things for his law firm which he thinks—he's not sure—are disgusting. Affleck suggests that a merely tentative sense of honor can become pure anguish; he's almost moving. As for Samuel L. Jackson, he pulls off something rarely attempted in movies: his Doyle Gipson is a middle-class failure, like Arthur Miller's Willy Loman or Saul Bellow's Tommy Wilhelm, a recovering alcoholic who speaks with strange precision, never sure if he's being too mild or too aggressive.

"Changing Lanes" assumes an easy audience acceptance of corruption in the law. There are patches of shrewd, gratifyingly nasty writing, including an astonishing scene in which Gavin's beautiful young wife (Amanda Peet), the boss's daughter, tells him sweetly that if she had wanted to marry an *honest* man she would have married someone else. Roger Michell expertly manages the scale and the moral weight of the drama, but his pacing is off—"Changing Lanes" is overdynamized, with a camera that won't settle down and stop moving, and Michell cuts between the men as they run around town so often that he might be filming a basketball game. The movie also concludes too abruptly, which makes the furious buildup of anger earlier in the picture seem like a put-on. Michell may have been trying to generate some superficial excitement, but the real excitement of the story lies deeper. "Changing Lanes" is miscalculated, yet a lot of it goes oddly right—so right that some members of the audience, recalling times when they blew up and acted stupidly, may be haunted by it for years. ♦

THE BACK PAGE BY ROZ CHAST


THE PARTY, AFTER YOU LEFT
I think it's time we served the really good champagne.
Yeah - I'll pour the rest of this swill into the toilet.
Poor Benicio Del Toro! He's standing there all alone.
I have the most scandalous piece of gossip to share.
Would anyone here like to try this very, very safe, short-acting, non-addictive, extremely fantastic new drug?
Thank God she's gone!
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Hey! Look who just walked in!! YO! JESUS!! BUDDHA!! OVER HERE!!!
R. Chast

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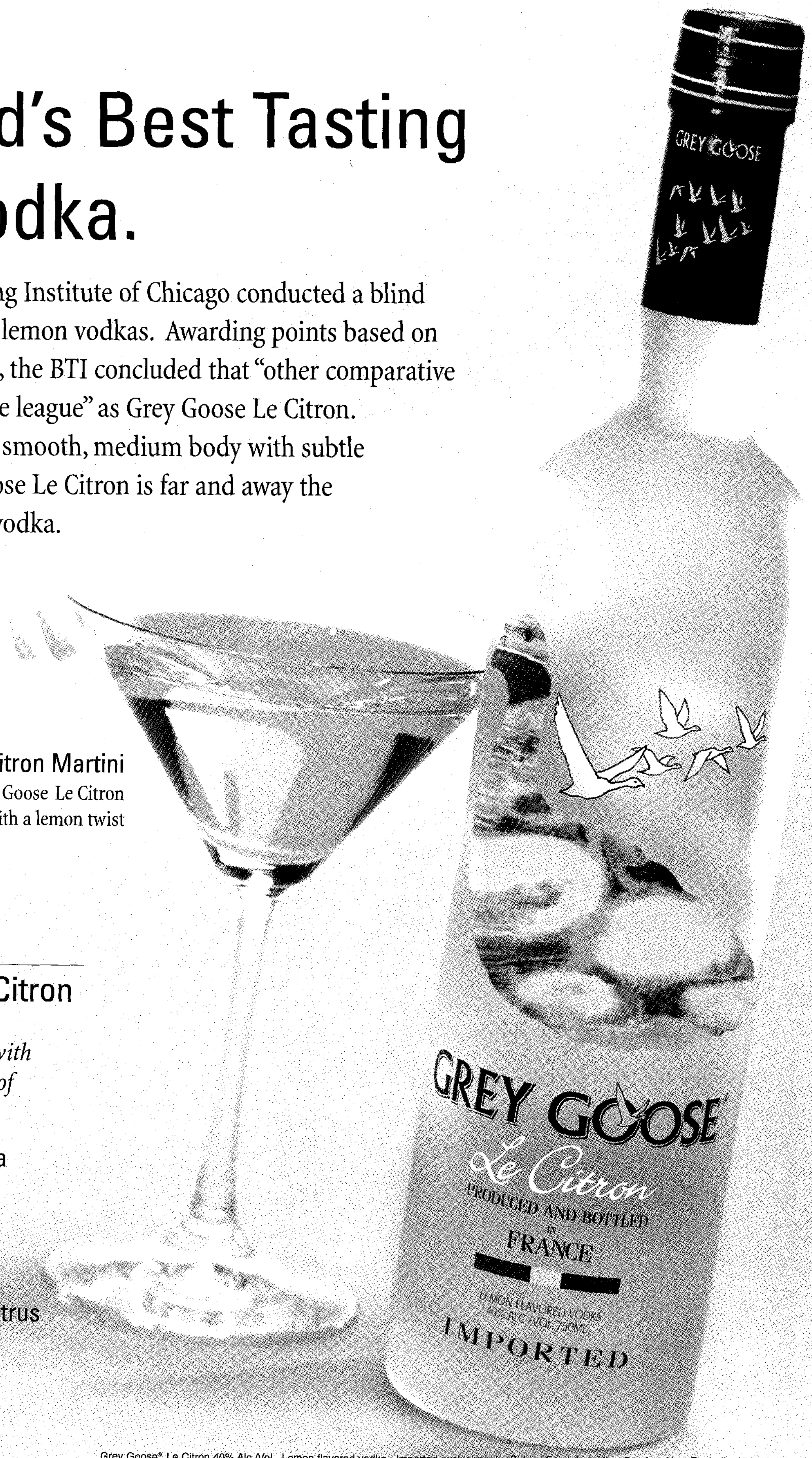
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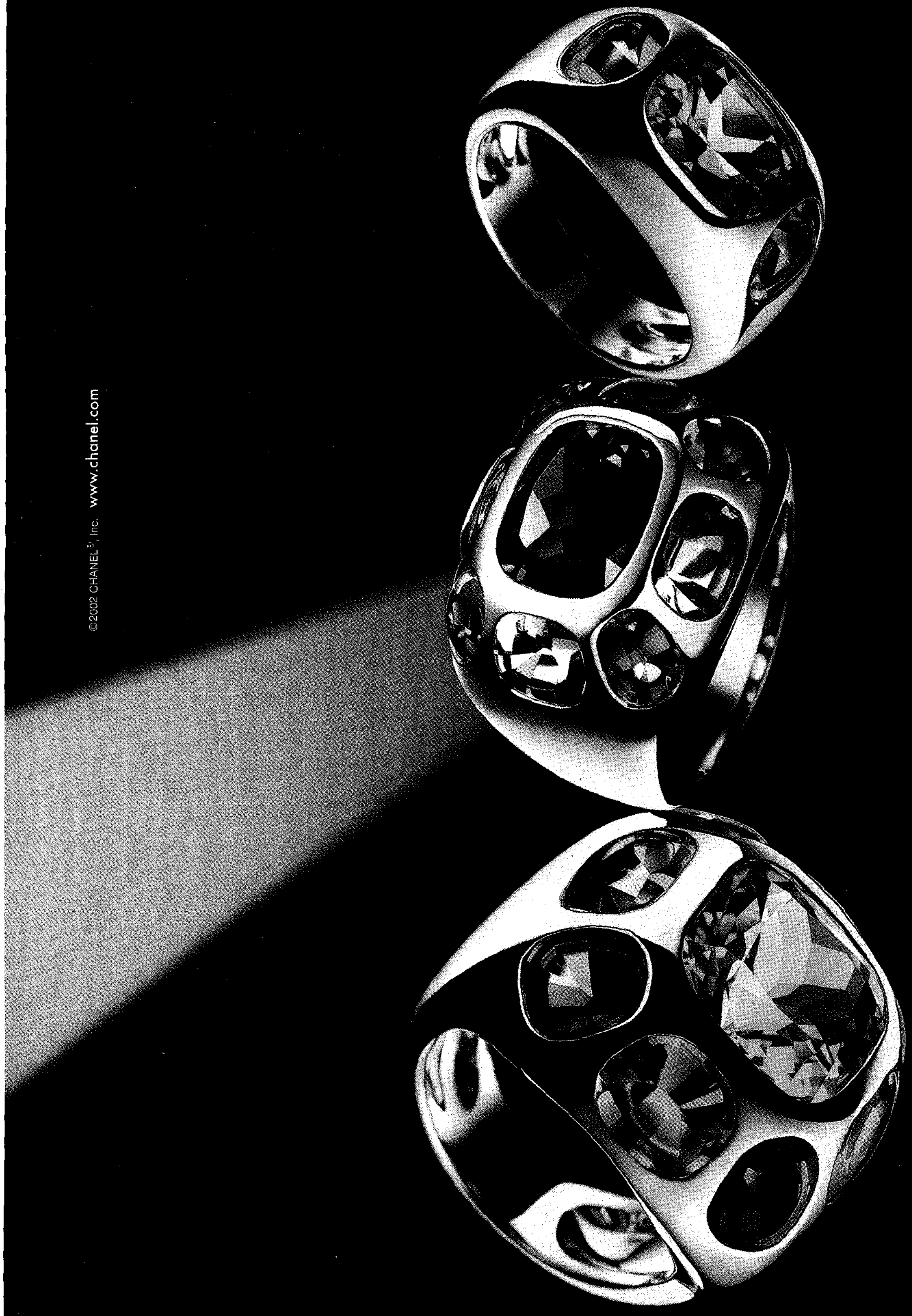

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